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Jones, Henry Arthur

Chevaleer : a comedy in three acts





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THE CHEVALEER

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

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PERSONS REPRESENTED.

THE CHEVALIER MOUNTEAGLE.

THE HON. HARCOURT CRANAGE, Lord Birdlip's guardian.

THE EARL OF BIRDLIP.

SIR JOHN KELLOND, Lady Anne's husband.

CHARLIE INSKIP.

ABEL NOKES, Nokes's Moral Waxworks.

PROFESSOR SNEWIN, Snewin's Temple of Magic.

SAM TURVEY.

BEN GOLLOP.

SELLARS.

DOPSON.

LINDELL.

LADY ANNE KELLOND.

MRS. FULKS-MEESOM.

JUNO MOUNTEAGLE.

WIDLEY.

ACT I.

SCENE.—THE “WOOLPACK” AT GRANDBURY.

ACT II.

**SCENE.—SIR JOHN'S STUDY AT KELLOND PARK.
THE SAME MORNING.**

ACT III.

**SCENE.—THE PAVILION IN KELLOND PARK.
A FORTNIGHT LATER.**

Time: **THE PRESENT.**



ACT I.

SCENE: "*The Woolpack Hotel*" at Grandbury. A large bar and smoking-room in an old-fashioned midland hotel. At back, an old-fashioned staircase mounts four or five steps to a landing, and then divides right and left, going up each side to the first floor. One or two bedroom doors are seen on each side on the top landing. At back of the lower landing is a large window, immediately behind which is seen the figure of a wooden horse belonging to a steam roundabout. This horse remains the most conspicuous object during the whole act. On right side is an outer door; a small window above it; a grandfather's clock just below it. A large beaver hat and an overcoat are hanging on a peg further up right; a very large stick with silver knob on the rail beside them. A bagatelle table up stage right. On left side is a door leading into the house. Above this door is the bar with window opening out into the room. A large fireplace down stage left. A large table half way up stage and towards the left. One or two marble tables about the room. Round the walls are the usual advertisements seen in hotels. The time is five on a morning in October. When the curtain rises it is still night and gas jets are burning round the room. A large dying wood fire in the fireplace. The place is in great disorder; bottles, glasses, pewter-pots, plates, etc., are

in confusion on the tables and floor. The baize cloth of the large table left is pulled over on the side towards the audience so that it touches the floor. When it is lifted, a mass of tarpaulin cloth such as is used for covering vans is seen to be lying under the table. Discover BEN GOLLOP, asleep in chair to right of table, with a bottle clasped in his arms, and a black clay pipe in his mouth. He is a disreputable little sprite of sixty, with white hair, a pimpled face, and a merry eye. BOB SNEWIN, a fat, greasy, jovial, gipsy-looking, man of forty, is rolling on the floor with a glass in hand and a bottle by his side, singing a snatch of a rowdy song in an uncertain tipsy voice. SAM TURVEY, a heavy, thickset man of fifty is lounging against a marble topped table, beating time to BOB SNEWIN, and joining in for a note or two. The clock strikes five. BOB SNEWIN stops in his tipsy song, turns on floor towards the clock, counting each stroke and swaying backwards and forwards.

Bob. [Singing to himself.]



HEN wake me, oh wake me, dear mother." [Clock strikes. His finger lifted to the clock, his body swaying backwards and forwards.] One! Two! Three! Four! Five! [The clock ceases.] Six!

[The clock is silent.

Bob. [Shouting.] Six! Spit it out, grandfather! Ugh! [Makes faces at the clock, turns to SAM.] Sam, at nine o'clock to-morrow—hic—this morning, you and I got to be at Kellond Park, begoy!

Sam. Yes, chummy!

Bob. [Composing himself for sleep on the floor.] At six o'clock, Sam, you wake me up, and off we start!

Sam. Right, chummy!

Bob. We'll crab the Tchevaleer this time—begoy we'll crab him!

Sam. [*Hilariously.*] Begoy, we'll crab the Tchevaleer this time.

Bob. [*Singing himself off to sleep.*] "Then wake me, oh wake me, dear mother!"

[*BEN GOLLOP sits up and listens. The handle of the door right is tried from the outside, gently at first, then more urgently.*

Abel Nokes. [*Voice outside.*] Hillo there! Tchevaleer! Ben! Hoho! Bob Snewin!

Bob. [*On floor, shouts out.*] That's me! [*Picking himself up.*] Hoho, Abel! is that you?

Abel. [*Outside.*] Yes, let me in.

[*SAM lounges up to the door right, unlocks it, opens it, admits ABEL NOKES, who enters. ABEL is a dry, taciturn showman, about fifty-five.*

Abel. [*Looking round, lifting up his hands.*] What a scene!

Bob. [*Taking up a half full bottle of champagne.*] What's the matter, Abel?

Abel. Ain't you ashamed of yourselves, wasting the precious hours of the night in drunkenness and riot, when you ought to be watching and praying?

Bob. Hold your jaw, old psalmsmiter! 'Cause you're converted, is none of your pals ever to have a spree?

Abel. What're you all doing 'ere, feasting and reveling at the best hotel in the town, as if you was lords?

Bob. It's the Tchevaleer! He give a party last night to all the profession at Grandbury fair. Why he asked you, didn't 'e?

Abel. Yes, but I've give up all carnal pleasures.

Bob. Begoy! you would have corpsed us with that mug. Well, the Tchevaleer gets here from Paris! Went there to buy a new illusion, begoy! Drops in at the fair, sees his gal Juno and his roundabouts is all right, puts up here for the night, and orders a tremendous blow out for all his pals! Does us all like fighting-cocks. Whiskey! and port! and fizz! Here!

[*Sticking the bottle under ABEL'S nose.*

Abel. [*Sniffing involuntarily, pushing the bottle away.*] No, I've been a strict teetotaller the last six months!

Bob. So 've I, begoy, the last six minutes. [*Drinks.*] Well, jest as we was all sbeautiffully comf'rably kisky, in comes Sellars the landlord: "Now, genelman," he says, "Clear out *like* genelman," says he. And I says "Blowed if I clear out," I says, and Sam says "Blowed if I clear out," Sam says—

Sam. [*Echoes.*] "Blowed if I clear out," I says.

Bob. Well, Sellars cleared most of 'em out. But when Sellars comes to Sam and me, he judged he'd better not, eh Sam?

Sam. He judged he'd better not, chummy.

Bob. And Sellars says, "The Tchevaleer Mount-eagle's friends may remain the night in the 'ouse, provided the Tchevaleer pays for their bedrooms in the morning. "Righto Sellars," sings out the Tchevaleer! "Bring in the foaming gargle as before! Three bottles bring, and then three bottles more." There's poetry for you! Out of his own 'ed. Oh lor', begoy!

[*Puts his hands to his head and groans.*]

Abel. Ah, you're tasting the fruits of your debauchery—

Bob. I am, old pal. [*Drinking.*] Where was I? Well, Sellars brings in the "foaming gargle as before. Three bottles bring"—[*BEN falls on floor. Gazing round*] and—well—I leave you to judge. [*Waving his arm round the room.*] Look at the place—look at all of us—Here! [*Stuffing the bottle under ABEL'S nose.*]

Abel. No, I only take it as medicine now!

[*Pushing it away.*]

Bob. That's how I take it, begoy! [*Drinks.*]

Abel. Where's the Tchevaleer?

Bob. Where's the Tchevaleer?

[*SAM and BOB roar with laughter. BOB rolls round and kicks BEN GOLLOP who wakes up.*]

Bob. [*Kicking BEN.*] Where's the Tchevaleer, Ben?

[BEN and SAM roar. BOB slouches up to the table, raises the table-cover and shows the mass of tarpaulin lying under it. The mass stirs and a prolonged snore comes from it. A further roar of laughter from BOB, SAM and BEN.]

Bob. Bagged him up in his own tarpaulin, begoy!

Abel. The Tchevaleer? [Pointing to the mass.]

Bob. Yes.

[The mass turns a little and discovers a label on it; another snore; more laughter from BOB, SAM and BEN. BOB drops the table cover, and lets it fall, so that it hides the tarpaulin from audience. The first signs of dawn appear through the window at back; very gradually through the following scenes the sun rises, until a splendid red dawn illuminates the figure of the wooden horse outside, and beyond it the various attractions of the yesterday's country fair; swing-boats, booths, shooting-galleries, etc. But the figure of the wooden horse still remains dominant.]

Abel. [Advancing towards table.] What's the meaning of this 'ere tomfoolery?

Bob. [Stopping him.] Stop that, Abel! Don't you wake him, or, begoy, I'll—Look here, chaps, being in the state in which we now are, we shall want some 'elp. Shall we let Abel in along of us?

Sam. I don't care.

Ben. Yes, let Abel in—he's jolly good fellow—

Bob. All right. Now, Abel, s'elp yer solemn 'oly davy, wish you may die the next momint, if you split on us to the Tchevaleer.

Abel. What's your game, Bob? Is all fair and square?

Bob. Yes.

Abel. Then I give you my solemn word I won't split.

Bob. Well, the Tchevaleer is your old pal, ain't he?

Abel. Yes.

Bob. So 'e is mine! So 'e is Sam's. So 'e is Ben's. So 'e is evrybody's. And a better pal never breathed, so far as being a pal goes. But the Tchevaleer is too downy! And too grabbing!

Abel. The Tchevaleer is grabbing!

Bob. Grabs at everything.

Sam. I remember the Tchevaleer before he was the Tchevaleer, when he was nothing but William Makins, 'umble travelling photographer.

Ben. The Tchevaleer has got a 'ed on 'im.

Bob. So 've I got a 'ed! So 'ev us all! O lor' begoy, what a 'ed I got on me now! [*Groans.*

Ben. And mind you, the Tchevaleer 'ev got a 'eap of learning.

Sam. Yes—takes in the Royal Select Library of High-class Fiction. And studies it too!

Ben. That's where he gets his tofficky language and manners from!

Bob. It ain't his tofficky language and manners what I envy! It ain't his 'ed! It ain't his learning! It's his blarmnation luck! Look at 'im! Circuses here! People's palace there! Steam roundabouts and gallopers everywhere! Sends his gal Juno to a boarding-school at Upper Norwood for two terms! Goes over to Paris to buy this 'ere new Paradise of Illusion! Pulling it in by 'an'fuls all round! And still grabbing!

Abel. Well s'pose 'e is, what's the sense of this 'ere?

[*Pointing under table.*

Bob. What's the sense of it, begoy? [*Bursts into a roar of laughter in which he is joined by SAM and BEN.*] You've 'eard of this 'ere centenary celebration wot is to take place at Kellond Park.

Abel. Centenary Celebration!

Bob. To the honour and glory of Inkerman Kellond.

Abel. Who's Inkerman Kellond?

Bob. He was the grandfather of Sir John Kellond, Bart. They nicknamed him Inkerman Kellond, fustly,

'cus he was born on the anniversary of Inkerman day, Annie Domino lor' knows when! And secondly, 'cus when he do get to Inkerman, he blazes away till both his blessed arms and one eye and arf his nose is blowed off. So they made a British 'ero of 'im; and now they're going to give 'im a centenary. [*Pulling a provincial paper out of his pocket.*] Read that!

Abel. [*Takes paper, reads.*] "To showmen and others. Wanted a Master Showman to organize the centenary fête to be given in honour of the late General Sir Robert Kellond on the anniversary of Inkerman, November 5th. Apply personally to Sir John Kellond at Kellond Park, next Thursday morning at nine."

Bob. Sam and me sees that, and we says one to another, "Begoy, that's our job."

Sam. That's our job, chummy!

Bob. But the Tchevaleer's gal Juno, she ferrets it out, the young 'ussy, and telegraphs off to the Tchevaleer and 'e 'urries back from Paris to grab our job. Orders a carriage an' pair of 'osses—if you please, to drive over to Kellond Park and see the bart this morning.

Abel. Well?

Bob. Well? [*Lifts up the table-cloth and looks at the tarpaulin.*] Well, the Tchevaleer ain't looked at a bed for two nights and towards three o'clock he drops off to sleep. And 'e snores, 'e snores—begoy—'e snores fit to split his downy old 'ed into smithereens. An' we shook 'im, and shook 'im, and all of a sudden I says to Sam—I says [*roars with laughter*, SAM and BEN join in], "We'll crab the Tchevaleer," I says. "There's the tarpaulin belonging to his roundabout outside," I says. "Fetch me a skewer and we—we—and we [*roaring with laughter*] bagged 'im up in 'is own tarpaulin, begoy! Stuck a label on 'im, give the boots 'arf a crown not to wake 'im—and there 'e is, good for another six hours: [*snore from under table*] 'ark at 'im—'ark at 'im! [*Another snore.*]

Abel. You poor drunken fools——

[*Advancing to table with determination.*]

Sam. [*Stopping him fiercely.*] No you don't, Abel! You let the Tchevaleer be!

Abel. You're sure it's all fair and square?

[*Taking paper from him.*]

Bob. Yes, Abel—you give us your word you wouldn't split. Now do you stand in along of us, or don't you?

Abel. You're sure it's all fair and square? You ain't a-doing of the Tchevaleer?

Sam. Doing of him! Doing of the Tchevaleer! D'ye 'ear that, chummy? [*Roars at the thought.*]

Bob. Sam and me was fust on the job. And there's a hundred quid hanging on to it.

Abel. Then what's your game? What are you a-letting me into it for?

Bob. 'Cus—well look at us—I akse you, Abel, is either one of us [*sweeping his hand round to include BEN and SAM*] in a proper state to talk to a bart?

Abel. [*Looking at them.*] You ain't in a proper state for nothing except to be prayed for and pumped on.

Bob. Right, old pal—oh my 'ed!

Abel. [*Seizing him by the scruff of the neck.*] Come and put it under the pump.

Sam. My 'ed wouldn't be any the wus for a ducking.

Abel. Come along, then! I'll give you all a good sousing, and then we'll get a bit of breakfast and go over to Kellond Park and see what's to be done with this 'ere centenary. Where's the Tchevaleer's gal?

Bob. Juno? The Tchevaleer left her to get the roundabouts on to Bampstead fair.

Abel. She ain't in the hotel here?

Bob. No; he took lodgings for her in the town. Won't never let his gal come near a public-house.

Abel. It's a pity as your parents didn't take the same loving care of you. Why, you poor wretched sinful——

Bob. Shut up, Abel! and come and give me my dowsing. Now, chaps! [*BEN and SAM go off right. A snore comes from table.*] 'Ark at 'im! 'Ark at 'im!

There's beauty sleep for you! Bagged 'im up in his own tarpaulin!

[Roars with laughter.]

[Exeunt BOB and ABEL right. The snores cease from under the table. A long pause. The sun now shows at back and the room grows a little lighter. LADY ANNE KELLOND appears at the door of a bedroom on the top of the stairs left; she opens it and looks timidly out; shows fright, comes out and looks down. She is in travelling-dress, with hat; about twenty-eight; pretty; piquant looking; delicate; with indications of a highly-strung nervous disposition. She looks over the balustrade, listens, at last comes down the stairs very fearfully; as she reaches the landing, she catches sight of the wooden horse, utters a little scream and stops a moment; at length, reassured, she comes down into the room, listening; goes to door left; opens it noiselessly, looks off, closes it, goes across to door right, has her hand on the handle, and is about to open it when she is arrested by the voice of CHARLIE INSKIP, who has entered at the top on the right hand side. He is a pleasant, weak, harmless, vacillating, good-natured, well-dressed man about thirty. He comes downstairs calling to her in a whisper.]

Charlie. Nancy! Nancy!

Lady A. [Frightened.] Go back! We mustn't be seen together!

Charlie. [Coming down to her.] You needn't be afraid! There's nobody about!

Lady A. Are you sure?

Charlie. Yes, quite—and we must have a talk and tot things up, eh?

Lady A. Yes, I suppose.

C

Charlie. Well, this is the only place, and it's a public room——

Lady A. [*Frightened.*] Don't come near me, please.

Charlie. I won't. Don't be frightened.

Lady A. Oh! I've had an awful night—that dreadful hurdygurdy!

Charlie. Yes—I thought the beast would never stop.

Lady A. I shall never forget it! Ugh! [*Shudders.*]
And the terrible tunes it played.

Charlie. I never slept a wink till past two.

Lady A. I never slept at all.

Charlie. What did you do?

Lady A. I sat at my window looking at the people at the fair, and listening to that horror, till it got on my nerves; then I lay on the bed, and kept my fingers in my ears, till the thing stopped. What did you do?

Charlie. Oh, I mouched about the fair. Then I mouched back here. There were a lot of showmen shouting and singing——

Lady A. Yes! [*Shuddering.*] They kept it up all the night.

Charlie. Well, I had a couple of whiskies and then I went up to my room, and had a jolly good think over everything. Lady Nancy, I'm awfully sorry!

Lady A. Sorry!

Charlie. I didn't mean to behave like a cad to you and Jack. [*Indignant exclamation from LADY ANNE.*] And you must own I didn't press my attentions when you objected. [*She makes a contemptuous exclamation.*] Nancy, there's no harm done?

Lady A. No harm done! Suppose it should be known that you and I stayed here the night?

Charlie. But we didn't arrive together. That was a good idea of mine to come in separately, as if we were strangers.

Lady A. But that makes it look all the worse. It will seem as if we arranged it. Oh, how could you be so foolish as to follow me here?

Charlie. I don't know. I couldn't help it!

Lady A. Couldn't help it?!

Charlie. No—you see Cranage and I had been listening to Jack slanging you all the afternoon——

Lady A. Well, husbands and wives have words sometimes. Jack and I do, constantly.

Charlie. Well, I can't bear to hear a man slanging the woman I love, not even when he is her husband!

Lady A. The woman you love! [*Very severely.*] Now, Charlie, this nonsense must stop! I won't hear another word of it!

Charlie. I can't help it, Nancy! Ever since Milly chucked me and married Dick Harrington—well, you know the state I was in—if it hadn't been for your sympathy——

Lady A. Sympathy! I told you all through I could only give you my sympathy, nothing more!

Charlie. Yes, I know, but I felt so down in the mouth, sympathy was no use to me. If I hadn't had somebody to fall in love with, I should simply have cut my throat.

Lady A. Cut your throat?!

Charlie. [*Solemnly.*] I should simply have cut my throat. You saved me from that.

Lady A. [*Mutters.*] It's a pity I did.

Charlie. Eh? Don't say that. Well, you being Milly's cousin, and so much like her—it was only natural I should fall in love with you. [*Indignant exclamation from LADY ANNE.*] And you being so much nicer than Milly——

Lady A. You'll say next that I encouraged you!

Charlie. Well, you have been jolly sympathetic!

Lady A. Charlie, this is almost an insult!

Charlie. I assure you not. Well, there I was. What was I to do?

Lady A. But what made you come after me last night?

Charlie. Well, when you and Jack were rowing I heard you say you were going to stay with your friend Mrs. Fulks-Meesom. I knew she lived at Biddingford, and I knew you'd have to change here

at Grandbury Junction. So I got the Bradshaw and I found you'd have to wait an hour and a half for the Biddingford train. So I thought "By Jove, it's only ten miles to Grandbury—if I drive over I shall just catch her!"

Lady A. Catch me? But why?

Charlie. So I trumped up a tale to Jack about some urgent business in town, and told him I'd be back to-morrow morning—that's this morning. Then I pitched a few things into my portmanteau, whipped off to the "Bell," got their fly, and drove like blazes to the Junction here, and I just caught you before your train started!

Lady A. Still I don't understand what made you follow me?

Charlie. Well, you know, Nancy, you're just the type of woman that fetches me—it always has been your type that——

Lady A. [*Indignantly.*] Oh! [*Suddenly.*] Charlie, your story about having a message for me from Jack—you haven't any message?

Charlie. Well, not exactly.

Lady A. You told me that to take up my time and make me lose my train?

Charlie. Well, I thought——

Lady A. What did you think? What could you think?

Charlie. I thought here's a woman who has been jolly kind and sympathetic to me, and if I can repay her in any way—well, I don't know exactly what I did think; but at any rate, I thought, "She's in distress, and I'll be on the spot!"

Lady A. [*Bitterly.*] On the spot. Yes, you are on the spot!

Charlie. And of course I shall see you through. What had we better do?

Lady A. I'm sure I don't know! [*Suddenly starts.*] Ha!

Charlie. What's the matter?

Lady A. Hush!

Charlie. What is it?

Lady A. Didn't you hear something?

Charlie. No—where?

Lady A. [*Again starts suddenly.*] Ha!

Charlie. I say you'll give me the jumps directly.

Lady A. I thought I heard something.

Charlie. No, there's nobody about. It's only your nerves.

Lady A. I suppose so. After this awful night—that horrible thing has quite demoralized me. Oh, if Jack should find out——

Charlie. He won't! don't be frightened! I'll see you through.

Lady A. What did Jack do when I left the house last night?

Charlie. Oh he stamped and cursed about a bit, and——

Lady A. Did he say anything about me?

Charlie. Well—he went on slanging you.

Lady A. How?

Charlie. I'd rather not tell you.

Lady A. Yes, please. Tell me exactly what Jack said!

Charlie. He mumbled something about your being the——

Lady A. Yes! What?

Charlie. The deedest, obstinatest something or the other; and when once you got your head down——

Lady A. Ha!

Charlie. And the bit between your teeth——

Lady A. Ha! ha! ha! Obstinatest? Ha! Bit between my teeth? Yes, the bit is between my teeth so far as that wretched centenary goes. Now, Charlie, listen. Whatever happens I will not——

Charlie. I say, don't say anything rash.

Lady A. Yes! whatever happens, I will not go to that centenary. I will have nothing to do with it. I will not be in Kellond when it takes place. There! I've said it! Don't you think I'm right?

Charlie. Quite right.

Lady A. It will cost a thousand pounds at least! And what for? For whom? For Inkerman Kellond.

Charlie. I suppose old Inkerman Kellond was a bit of a — wasn't he?

Lady A. I believe he was a fine soldier, but apart from that he was a perfect terror. And I don't see why Jack should spend a thousand pounds on a centenary for him, when we could have a villa at Beaulieu for five hundred, do you?

Charlie. No! You stick out for the villa at Beaulieu.

Lady A. I intend to. At least I would if it hadn't been for this——

Charlie. For what?

Lady A. Well, I meant to persuade Laura to go out there with me.

Charlie. Who's Laura?

Lady A. Mrs. Fulks-Meesom. I was going to her last night, and then we should have gone out together, leaving Jack to follow or no as he pleased.

Charlie. Well, why can't you go on to her now?

Lady A. Oh, I can't now, after this dreadful night. I'm all to pieces. Charlie, you don't think anybody will suspect——

Charlie. What?

Lady A. Well our being here together—Sellars, the landlord, knows me quite well.

Charlie. He doesn't know me—and we haven't been seen together.

Lady A. No, but—if—if Sellars should mention to Jack that I stayed here—oh, Charlie, what had I better do?

Charlie. You must either go on to Mrs. Fulks-Meesom, or go back to Jack. The question is, which do you feel most inclined for?

Lady A. Neither. My head's going round—I can't remember anything—if I go to Laura I shall have to explain to her—no, I can't. And if I go back to Jack——

Charlie. Yes, I'm sure that would be best.

Lady A. But after that dreadful row with him I can't go back with any feeling of dignity.

Charlie. Oh yes, you can. Put on a good bit of side—make Jack knuckle under.

Lady A. I'm quite determined he shall knuckle under about the centenary.

Charlie. Quite right. Well, take a high tone—snub him—and——

Lady A. But where am I to say I spent the night?

Charlie. I shouldn't say anything about it. Let him think you stayed with Mrs. Fulks-Meesom. I suppose if you give her the tip to say nothing you could depend on her?

Lady A. Oh yes—Laura would say anything I asked her to say.

Charlie. Is she likely to see Jack soon?

Lady A. Not for some weeks, perhaps months.

Charlie. Well, there you are. It will all have blown over long before then. You're sure she'll help you out in case of need?

Lady A. Oh yes, she's my oldest friend. I'm quite sure of Laura.

Charlie. Very well, then. There's nothing to fear. You go back to Jack, and I'll——

Lady A. What are you going to do?

Charlie. Oh, I'll hang about and come over by the nine o'clock train. I told Jack I should be back this morning——

Lady A. Yes, but we'd better not get there by the same train. I'll get a carriage and drive home. That will be best—I wonder if the ostler's about yet? [*Going towards the window right. The clock begins to strike six and startles her.*] Ha!

Charlie. I say, what's the matter?

Charlie. Don't be alarmed. [*Looking out of the window.*] Yes, there are the men in the stableyard. Shall I order the carriage for you?

Lady A. No, it mustn't be known that we're together. Oh!

Charlie. What's the matter?

Lady A. Nothing. Nothing. You go back to your room.

Charlie. There's nothing more I can do for you?

Lady A. No—no—except please don't be seen speaking to me. [*Motioning him to go upstairs.*]

Charlie. And you?

Lady A. I'll stay here a moment and calm myself. Then I'll call Sellars and order the carriage. Go, please.

Charlie. All right. Don't be frightened. [*Going upstairs.*] I'm awfully sorry, but I'll see you through, whatever happens. [*She sits down at table and waves him impatiently to go upstairs.*] Nobody need know anything about it, and if Jack should find out, we can say——

[*Another impatient movement from her. He disappears on the top landing, right. She remains seated at table. A pause. A noise under the table; she shows great fright; rises in terror; listens; another noise; she goes to table, raises the table-cover; the mass of tarpaulin moves about, and a hand protrudes from a rent in it; she drops the table-cover, and rushes off left with a succession of shrieks and gasps. A noise of struggling and tearing is heard from under the table; the mass of tarpaulin moves about, and at length the CHEVALIER MOUNTEAGLE partially emerges dragging the tarpaulin with him from under the table; yawns, rubs his eyes; looks round on the scene; tries to collect his thoughts. The CHEVALIER is a handsome, vigorous, genially aggressive, overbearing man of fifty; full of good-nature and bonhomie; capable, vigilant, alert, with pleasant humorous features, and a deep hearty voice. His manners and diction are carefully studied from the best models*]

in cheap fiction; he has a constant magnificent pose and magnificent gestures; a lofty, gracious condescension towards everyone, especially towards his superiors; and an unfailing readiness of resource and an impudent assurance which never become offensive. He is really a shrewd man of business; his studied pose and gorgeous diction being a part of his trade as showman. He is quite smartly dressed, but with a very obtrusive waistcoat and scarf. He wears much heavy jewellery. He sits on the tarpaulin and surveys the scene, his memory returning gradually after a profound sleep. At length he takes up an empty bottle lying near him; smells it, puts it away with an expression of great disgust; takes out a pocket looking-glass and comb; tidies himself; combs his hair; looks at the clock.

Chev. Past six o'clock! How long have I been asleep? [*Trying to collect his thoughts.*] Heard it strike one! Heard it strike two! Never heard it strike three! Never heard it strike four! Never heard it strike five! Never heard it strike six. I've been asleep over three hours! Five hours for a man! Six for a woman! Seven for a fool! And three for a hero! And we wake like a giant refreshed! Hoho! Bob! Sam! Where are you all? [*Looks round, takes up a corner of the tarpaulin, sees the label, reads it.*] "The Tchevaleer Mounteagle, Eaglescliff, Ravensbourne Park Road, Upper Norwood. This side up with care. Perishable. Deliver immediately. Old pal, don't grab after everything. Leave a little for your old pals." It's Bob Snewin! the silly fool! [*Looks at clock.*] Righto Professor Robert Snewin. A hasty snatch of breakfast! And then with all speed to the worthy baronet, Sir John Kellond.

[*He is still sitting on the floor in the tarpaulin*

when SELLARS, the landlord of "The Woolpack" enters as if hastily called from sleep; in slippers, coat and trousers over his nightshirt, no collar or tie.

Sellars. [Entering.] Now you chaps, what's up here? [Looks round.] Oh, it's you, Tchevaleer! [Calls off left.] Come in, my lady!

Chev. My lady!

Sellars. You needn't be afraid. [LADY ANNE re-enters still much frightened.] It's only the Tchevaleer!

[The CHEVALIER rises and makes a profound bow to LADY ANNE, who stands regarding him with terror and curiosity.

Chev. Righto, worthy Sellars! Righto, lady!

[Makes another profound bow.

Sellars. Don't be frightened, my lady! The Tchevaleer's friends have been having a lark. What were you doing in that thing, Tchevaleer?

Chev. [Mysteriously.] A sorry jest of my friend, Professor Snewin! No more of that if you love me, Sellars!

Sellars. Yes, Tchevaleer, but you and your friends have been disturbing the 'ole 'ouse all night; you've nearly frightened her ladyship out of her senses——

Chev. I frighten a lady! Heaven forefend! Your ladyship, I humbly crave ten thousand pardons!

[Another profound bow.

Lady A. [Regarding him with astonishment and terror.] Were you under the table in that?

[Pointing to tarpaulin.

Chev. "We" were.

Lady A. [More frightened.] "We"? There were two of you?

Chev. Two of me?

Lady A. You said "we."

Chev. [Pointing to himself.] I'm "we." [Pointing again to himself.] In my own person.

Lady A. I don't understand. Who are you?

Chev. [*Giving LADY ANNE a large showman's card.*]
The Tchevaleer Mounteagle, at your service, my lady!
[*She takes the card and looks at him.*

Sellars. Come, Tchevaleer—you see you've frightened her ladyship so as she can't get over it.

Lady A. It's nothing. Please get me a little breakfast. No, just a cup of coffee, and a carriage and horses. I want to drive to Kellond at once.

Sellars. Yes, my lady. Tchevaleer, you ordered a carriage and pair for Kellond this morning. But this is Lady Anne Kellond——

Chev. [*Surprised, looking at her.*] Lady Anne Kellond! Of Kellond Park?!

Lady A. [*Growing more frightened.*] Yes——

Sellars. And of course her ladyship must come first.

Chev. Of course her ladyship must come first. My lady, allow me to place my poor equipage at your disposal. I trust you will do me the honour of taking a seat beside me——

Lady A. What?

Chev. Give me the honour of escorting you to Kellond Park——

Sellars. What are you thinking of, Tchevaleer? Her ladyship must have my carriage and pair all to herself; and I'll drive you over in a dogcart.

Chev. Dogcart! A puny one-horse dogcart scarcely consorts with my position, Sellars; accustomed as I am to be driven through the streets by four fiery piebalds! Stand aside! [*Waving SELLARS away, turns to LADY ANNE.*] The worthy baronet, Sir John Kellond, is, I presume, some connection of yours?

Lady A. Sir John Kellond is my husband!

Chev. [*Surprised and delighted.*] Happy aristocrat thus to be mated. [*Bowing very low to her.*] Happy me thus to have the honour of meeting so fair a specimen of English lady-womanhood.

Sellars. Tchevaleer, you're presuming on her ladyship——

Lady A. [Frightened.] No Mr. Sellars—

Chev. [Sternly magnificent, waves SELLARS aside.]
Give place, man! My lady, may I crave a few minutes
audience with you alone? *[Mysteriously winks at her.]*
On a matter of urgent importance?

Lady A. [Timidly.] Ye-es.

Sellars. Tchevaleer, you'd better clear out, you're
upsetting her ladyship—

Chev. My lady, I appeal to you.

Lady A. Mr. Sellars, I wish to get home quickly.
I'll accept this gentleman's offer of a seat in his
carriage—*[SELLARS looks surprised.]* Will you get
my bill, please?

[Exit SELLARS slowly L., looking at LADY ANNE.]

Lady A. [Watches SELLARS off, then turns suddenly to CHEVALIER.] How long had you been there?

[Pointing to tarpaulin.]

Chev. For some brief lonely hours—

Lady A. Hours? You were asleep when—

Chev. [Beaming on her mysteriously.] Asleep, your
ladyship?

Lady A. Yes, haven't you been asleep?

Chev. Asleep? *[Beaming on her, winks at her.]*
Heaven bless the midnight splendour of those eyes,
Morpheus has no power over me. Asleep? When
I'm sound asleep, I'm thrice as wide awake as the
average ordinary mortal! *[She looks at him perplexed
and inquiring.]* Asleep?! *[He winks at her.]*

Lady A. But what were you doing there?

*Chev. [Winks, and makes her a solemn mysterious
sign which frightens her all the more.]* My lady, let us
draw a veil of silence over the indiscretions of the
past night.

Lady A. [More and more frightened.] What do you
mean?

Chev. Why pursue the subject, my lady? My
motto is, "Let the orgy of the night serve but as a
spur to the duties and toils of the morrow!" Now,

my lady, if you are graciously disposed to put my motto into practice, eh? Draw a veil of silence, eh?

[*Winks at her.*]

Lady A. Yes—certainly.

Chev. Then the follies of the night are swept into oblivion, and we proceed to business. I understand the right honourable Sir John Kellond—

Lady A. Sir John Kellond is not right honourable—

Chev. No?! They've overlooked him! Possibly you may be right honourable yourself, my lady?

Lady A. No, my father was the late Lord Birdlip—

Chev. Of course. My memory grows a little confused amongst titles—except my own. Now, my lady, I understand Sir John Kellond wishes to honour the memory of his illustrious ancestor, Inkerman Kellond, by giving him a centenary.

Lady A. I believe he is getting up some affair of that sort.

Chev. On a large scale?

Lady A. Yes, I believe. But I'm really taking no interest in it.

Chev. Taking no interest in it?! Oh, lady, for very shame's sake, don't say that! Let me implore you to aid me in shedding a halo of glory over the memory of our national hero, Inkerman Kellond.

Lady A. What do you mean?

[*CHEVALIER produces from his pocket a local paper like the one BOB SNEWIN has previously produced.*]

Chev. Ah, here it is. "Wanted a Master Showman to organize the centenary fête, etcetera." [*Giving her the paper; she takes it, regarding him fearfully all the while.*] My lady, I look upon this centenary as an event of national importance. My own grandfather fought at Waterloo, and was able to render some signal service at a critical moment. But, like all England's greatest heroes, he expired unrewarded, and he

now lies in a neglected grave in his native parish. However, I pass that over! I shall undertake this centenary in a spirit of the purest patriotism. Now, my lady, how far does Sir John propose to go in the matter of expenses?

Lady A. I can't say——

Chev. A thousand pounds?

Lady A. Perhaps.

Chev. Two or three thousand pounds? Eh?

Lady A. No, I don't think he would go as far as that.

Chev. [*Beaming on her, winking very slightly.*] Surely he would go as far as the lovely partner of his joys and sorrows is prepared to lead him? [*Bowing to her, beaming, winking; she grows more frightened.*] Oh, lady, do not cast so foul an aspersion on the gallant baronet as to say he isn't your willing slave in petty affairs of sordid cash?

Lady A. I daresay Sir John might be guided by me to some extent——

Chev. Then, my lady, if you will persuade him to leave this historic job in "our" hands, "we" will give the illustrious warrior who now sleeps in—where's the old chap buried?

Lady A. In the family vault at Kellond.

Chev. Well, there he is—on the premises, ready to preside over his own centenary, or for any emergency. Couldn't be better placed. And if you will deign to accept a seat in my carriage, and present me to Sir John, "we" will undertake to give the illustrious warrior whose ashes now repose in the family vault at Kellond, a centenary that shall kindle the martial ardour of the British youth in the surrounding districts, and give pause to any neighbouring nation that may have designs upon England. What do you say, my lady?

[*Beaming and winking at her.*]

Lady A. [*Glancing at the table.*] What were you doing under that table?

Chev. [*Beams and winks at her.*] My lady, let the

orgy of the night serve but as a spur to the duties and toils, etcetera, etcetera! My carriage is at your service.

Lady A. When do you start?

Chev. My horses are even now champing their bits, and pawing their hoofs with impatience to convey their lovely burden to her ancestral halls. Oh, lady, do not hesitate——

Lady A. [*More and more frightened.*] Very well, I'll drive over with you.

Chev. Righto! And with your aid, my lady, I will give the illustrious warrior who now sleeps, etcetera, a centenary that shall redound——

Lady A. Oh, I really cannot have anything to do with the centenary——

Chev. Oh, lady, say not so! [*Beaming and winking upon her.*] Let me claim you as my partner in this great enterprise.

Lady A. [*More and more frightened.*] I will present you to Sir John, and you must arrange everything with him. Get the carriage at once, please.

Chev. Yes, my lady. [*Opens door right, calls off.*] Ostler! Whato, ostler! My carriage! My lady of Kel-lond will accompany me! [*Takes his hat off peg.*] If I might venture, my lady——

Lady. A. What?

Chev. Whatever praise you deem fit to lavish upon me to the worthy baronet, I shall more than corroborate it. So you might perhaps lay it on a trifle thick, eh?

Oh lady, lay it on a trifle thick,
And your devoted squire will do the trick.

[*Exit right. CHARLIE appears on top landing, right, watching. LADY ANNE sees him, and signs to him to go back.*]

Charlie. [*Coming downstairs.*] I say, what's the matter?

Lady A. Oh, you wretch! See what you've done!

Charlie. [*Coming down.*] What?

Lady A. That dreadful man!

[*Pointing after* CHEVALIER.]

Charlie. Who is he?

Lady A. The Chevalier Mounteagle—the mammoth showman.

Charlie. What about him?

Lady A. He was under that table all the while we were talking just now.

Charlie. Under that table——

Lady A. Yes, concealed in that tarpaulin thing——

Charlie. What on earth for?

Lady A. I don't know. But he heard what we were saying——

Charlie. Are you sure?

Lady A. Yes—he keeps on threatening me——

Charlie. Threatening you?!

Lady A. Well, not exactly threatening, but he throws out hints that he knows all about it; then he makes the most dreadful faces, and winks at me.

Charlie. Winks at you! How dare he?

Lady A. What did we say to each other just now?

Charlie. I don't exactly remember.

Lady A. But think! Think! Think!

Charlie. Nothing much, did we? Nothing that mattered?

Lady A. Nothing that mattered? It all mattered, and of course—if he only heard part of it he might think——

Charlie. What?

Lady A. Oh, anything! If he heard us arranging to keep it all from Jack he'd naturally suppose that you and I—yes, that is what he does suppose! I feel sure he does, from the way he winks at me.

Charlie. What a beastly nuisance!

Lady A. Nuisance!

Charlie. But, after all, he can't do anything, and we aren't likely to see him again.

Lady A. Yes, he's going to Kellond now——

Charlie. What for?

Lady A. Jack has advertised for a showman to manage the centenary, and this man is applying for it. And he insists I shall drive over with him.

Charlie. Drive over to Kellond with him?!

Lady A. Yes, and introduce him to Jack and speak in his favour.

Charlie. You can't do that.

Lady A. If I don't he'll most likely tell Jack. Oh! it's awful——

Charlie. I say, I'd better horsewhip the fellow.

Lady A. Horsewhip him?! You?

Charlie. Well—threaten.

Lady A. What good would that do? He'd only make things out worse than they are. [*Going to window, right, looking out.*] He's there, talking to the ostler. Charlie, think, did that man see you last night?

Charlie. I came through here to go upstairs to my room. Why?

Lady A. If he saw you, and if he recognizes you——

Charlie. Oh, they didn't notice me. They were too busy enjoying themselves.

Lady A. But he must have heard your voice when he was under the table just now.

Charlie. Yes. Well, does that matter?

Lady A. Yes, because—if he remembers your voice and sees you at Kellond—oh! it's terrible! [*Looks out of window.*] He's coming back! Go to your room! Don't let him see us together.

Charlie. [*Goes upstairs.*] I'm sure I ought to stay and horsewhip him——

Lady A. Go to your room. Quick! Go!

Charlie. [*Goes quickly upstairs; stops and is about to speak; she makes an impatient gesture.*] See you at Kellond by-and-by.

[*Exit on top landing. She tries to compose herself. Enter CHEVALIER, door right.*]

Chev. In five minutes, my lady, my equipage will be at your service——

Lady A. I must pay my bill first. Where is the landlord?
[*Going to door left.*

Chev. [*Intercepts her.*] Permit me! [*Opens door left, shouts off.*] Sellars! My worthy Sellars! My lady of Kellond desires to pay her bill. Sellars!

[*He throws the door open and with a magnificent gesture stands aside for her to pass.*

Lady A. How far do you intend to carry this?

Chev. [*Puzzled.*] My lady?

Lady A. When you were under that table——

Chev. My lady, no more of that! A discreet veil of silence over the orgies of the night? Eh, my lady?

[*Winking and beaming at her.*

Lady A. Very well. That is perfectly understood.

[*Exit LADY ANNE left. CHEVALIER closes the door after her, comes back into the room, struts about, hands in pocket, and face beaming with self-satisfaction.*

Chev. [*Strutting about the room.*] Gaily we start upon this Inkerman campaign! Gaily! Gaily! [*Comes up to the tarpaulin, kicks it out of his way.*] A sorry jest, Robert Snewin. A sorry jest. [*Kicking the tarpaulin.*] We shall meet at Philippi, Robert Snewin. We shall meet at Philippi.

[*JUNO MOUNTEAGLE, a tall, handsome, fresh-looking girl of sixteen enters very hurriedly and excitedly door right. She is rather showily dressed, but not in bad taste.*

Juno. Father! Father, that rascal, Bob Snewin——

Chev. [*Stopping her, embracing her.*] Good morning, my duckling! My cherished brood of one! Kiss me!

Juno. [*Kisses him hurriedly.*] Father—[*breathless with the news*] Bob Snewin and Sam Turvey have hired a wagonette from the "Rose and Crown," and they've driven off as hard as they can to Kellond Park, to see Sir John before you, and get the centenary fête. I watched them drive off, and I got it all out of the ostler.

Chev. Say you so, my angel-pigeon? Say you so?

Juno. Make haste, father, and drive over to Kellond and get there before them.

Chev. [*Lays his finger on his nose and winks at her.*] "We" are there before them!

Juno. Father, they're miles ahead of you.

Chev. Not so, my child. "We" are miles ahead of them! "We" have outdistanced and out-flummoxed them to nothingness. They are a speck on the horizon!

Juno. [*Puzzled, looks at him inquiringly.*] Father, what do you mean?

[*Again he smiles and winks and lays his finger on his nose. JUNO is bewildered and distressed. She looks anxiously round the room, and sees traces of the previous night's dissipation.*]

Juno. [*Suddenly.*] Father, you've had another orgy!

Chev. A beautiful, tempestuous orgy, my bantling! What of that? Let the orgy of the night serve, etcetera——

Juno. Father, make haste or we shall lose the centenary. [*He continues winking and smiling.*] There's only just time! Father, what is the matter with you?

Chev. [*Again winking elaborately and laying his finger on his nose, in a mysterious whisper.*] "We" have her fair ladyship herself in tow.

Juno. What fair ladyship?

Chev. My Lady Kellond, or the Lady Anne Kellond, or her ladyship Anne. I don't exactly know the proper way to address her, so I give her a choice of epithets.

Juno. Where is she?

Chev. Shush! [*Points to door left.*] Going to give her a seat in my carriage and drive her in triumph to her ancestral halls.

Juno. No?!

Chev. Yes. Got her to promise to use her influence with the baronet and get me the job. Oh, I've made an enormous impression on her.

Juno. [*Looks at him with great admiration.*] Father, you are wonderful!

Chev. It's my manner that captivates all hearts. They instinctively feel that I am *the* one and only, *the* unique, *the* unapproachable!

Juno. Yes, father.

Chev. And then my command of language! There aren't three men in England that have got the command of language that I have.

Juno. No, I'm sure there aren't.

Chev. I can simply take the English language and do what I please with it.

Juno. Yes, father.

Chev. It took me a good many years to bring my manners and language up to their present standard. But it pays, my gosling, it pays! Her ladyship just now—she recognized it.

Juno. Recognized what?

Chev. That there was a subtle something about me she could neither imitate nor understand. She was dazed! struck dumb with admiration of me!

Juno. Was she?

Chev. Yes. Did she naturally wish to drive over to Kellond in my carriage and my company? Heaven guard the angelic innocence of your soul, not a deed little bit of it! But I magnetized her! I fairly carried her off her feet!

Juno. I am proud of you, father.

Chev. Righto. Kiss me. [*Kissing her.*] Now! [*Looking cautiously at door left, and speaking in a low tone.*] Follow me! The Lady Kellond says Sir John may run to a thousand pounds over this Inkerman business. We must work it up to two or three thousand at the least, eh!

Juno. Righto, father!

Chev. Three thousand pounds, and then!

Juno. What then, father?

Chev. What then?! What then?! What then?!
Three thousand pounds, and up goes the donkey into

the celestial welkin. I pay off my new steam galloper! I plant my new Paradise of Illusion in London! I capture the Metropolis—it lies prostrate at my feet! A fortune, my pretty wagtail! A fortune!

Juno. Can I help you?

Chev. Yes. You drive over with her ladyship and me. Watch the haughty baronet's face as I unfold my scheme. Dive into the pecuniary recesses of his soul. Fathom if he tumbles to three thousand pounds.

[He takes out a pair of lemon-coloured kid gloves and begins to put them on.]

Juno. I'll fathom him, father.

Chev. *[Catching sight of the roundabout.]* Hillo! How is it you haven't got the gallopers down and on the way to Bampstead?

Juno. There's a lot of people in the town still, and I thought we could run them for an hour or two this morning, and take a few shillings.

Chev. *[Struck with admiration.]* True offspring of a famous sire! The strain runs pure! Kiss me! *[Kisses her.]* Ah, my lady! *[To LADY ANNE who enters left followed by SELLARS carrying a tray with some change on it.]* My carriage awaits you, and bounteous Nature is in one of her most purling moods.

Sellars. You had no luggage, my lady?

Lady A. No—I didn't expect to be away from home for the night.

Sellars. *[Presenting tray.]* Your change, my lady.

Lady A. Give it to the servants.

Chev. Sellars, see that your menials have all ready for our journey.

[Motions SELLARS off right. SELLARS shows surprise. The CHEVALIER motions SELLARS off very imperiously. Exit SELLARS right.]

Lady A. I'll get inside the carriage where I sha'n't be seen.

Chev. As you please, my lady. Step forward, Juno.

My lady, allow me to present my daughter, Miss Juno Mounteagle?

Lady A. [Distantly.] How do you do?

Juno. Quite well thank you, my lady.

Chev. With your permission she will accompany us to Kellond——

Lady A. Not in the carriage with us?!

Chev. No, my lady. On the box seat with my coachman. She is a true child of Nature. Juno, my child, take your place beside my coachman. Engage him in some ordinary pleasant conversation. Be sweetly gracious to him, child, but do not place yourself on any level of familiarity.

Juno. No, father.

[CHEVALIER calls "Ostler." Ostler enters right. Exit JUNO right.

Chev. [Goes to door, calls off.] Ostler, escort my daughter to our carriage. Now, my lady.

[Offers his arm—she hesitates. CHARLIE enters above, and watches.

Chev. Oh lady, do not hesitate. Trust yourself to us. "We" are the very soul of honour! The very flower of chivalry! "Our" arm, my lady!

[She is about to take CHEVALIER'S arm. very reluctantly when the steam roundabout outside strikes up its tune, and the horse begins to move round. LADY ANNE utters a little scream and hurries off right. The CHEVALIER takes his stick from rail, puts his hat on it and rattles it round. CHARLIE comes slowly down-stairs.

CURTAIN.

(Two hours pass between Acts I and II.)



ACT II.

SCENE: SIR JOHN'S *study at Kellond Park. A cosy lounging-room in an English country-house. A door up stage right. A door down stage left. At the left corner at back a large bow window has been thrown out giving a view of English lawn and park scenery. Glass doors in the window leading out upon the lawn. At back centre a fireplace with fire burning. Above the fireplace a life-size painting of General Kellond, painted about the year 1860. He is a ferocious military personage in uniform, with a scar on his forehead, and numerous medals on his breast. A table down stage towards the right, and a table in the centre, left. A sofa below the table left.*

TIME: *About nine on the same morning as the first act.*

Discover the HON. HARCOURT CRANAGE and SIR JOHN KELLOND. CRANAGE is in the chair at table right, smoking and reading paper. He is a little, spare, crisp, shrewd, whitehaired old gentleman of sixty, with a shrill chirpy voice. SIR JOHN is a self-important, slow-witted, good-looking English country gentleman about thirty-five. He is walking up and down the room, evidently very much discomposed.

Sir John.



ID you notice the look she gave me when I said I was determined she should respect the dignity of my family?

Cran. [Indifferent, busy over his paper.]

Yes.

Sir J. Did you notice how she marched out of that door?

Cran. Yes.

Sir J. And smiled and kissed her hand to Charlie Inskip and you, and ignored me altogether?

Cran. Yes.

Sir J. Well, what do you think of such conduct?

Cran. Damned annoying.

Sir J. Annoying?! I will not put up with it. [*A pause; he repeats more emphatically to confirm his courage.*] I will not put up with it! Would you?

Cran. No.

Sir J. I'm going to have this centenary.

Cran. Yes.

Sir J. And I intend that Nancy shall be present and do the honours, eh?

Cran. Certainly.

Sir J. Not that I care tuppence about the confounded centenary! And it will cost a thousand pounds.

Cran. Yes.

Sir J. And after all [*glancing up at the portrait of Inkerman Kellond*] he may have been a good soldier, but he was a thorough old ruffian to my father and all his family.

Cran. [Glancing round at portrait.] He looks it.

Sir J. [Looking at portrait.] I begin to hate the sight of him. Cranage!

Cran. Well?

Sir J. How on earth did the idea get into my head to give that old blackguard a centenary?

[Pointing to portrait.]

Cran. Well, how did it?

Sir J. I don't know. The Minchins had their affair last year, and made a big splash; and then Nancy being so much against the centenary, that naturally made me very keen on it.

Cran. Naturally.

Sir J. Well, now I must go on with it, mustn't I?
[*CRANAGE takes no notice.*] Mustn't I?

Cran. [*Coming up to SIR JOHN.*] My dear Jack, if I were you, I should cut the whole business, make it up with Nancy, take her out to Beaulieu, thoroughly enjoy yourselves, and save the thousand pounds.

Sir J. What, cut the centenary?! I can't do that now.

Cran. Why not?

Sir J. I've told everybody about it. And then I've put my foot down with Nancy——

Cran. Oh!

Sir J. And if once a man gives in to his wife on a matter of principle——

Cran. You don't call this a matter of principle?

Sir J. Decidedly I do. Between husband and wife, whatever the husband lays down as a matter of principle, thereby becomes a matter of principle. Otherwise, where are we? What becomes of society?

[*Takes up a "Bradshaw" lying on the table.*]

Cran. By Jove, Buxom Beauty has gone to three to one——

Sir J. [*Looking at the "Bradshaw."*] Nancy couldn't have reached Biddingsford till nearly eleven last night.

Cran. [*Reading.*] "I hear that Brandysnap is not quite cherry ripe."

Sir J. Mrs. Fulks-Meesom too——

Cran. What's the matter with Mrs. Fulks-Meesom?

Sir J. She's a widow. And she isn't a woman I care for Nancy to be too friendly with. You heard me object to Nancy going to her yesterday——

Cran. Yes—well Nancy went.

Sir J. Yes. Still I shall not sanction Nancy going out to Beaulieu with her. Would you?

Cran. Certainly not.

Sir J. I put that very strongly in my telegram this morning to Mrs. Fulks-Meesom.

Cran. What did you say?

Sir J. I said, "Trust you will not go to Beaulieu with Nancy. Please tell her I shall expect her home this evening without fail."

Cran. Yes—well, let's hope Nancy will come!

Sir J. If she doesn't, I shall—well, what would you do?

Cran. [*Over his newspaper.*] Um——

Sir J. Hang it, Cranage, you might show a little interest and sympathy. She's your niece, and if it comes to a scandal——

Cran. Scandal? Nonsense!

Sir J. Nonsense?! Suppose Nancy stays on with Mrs. Fulks-Meesom——

Cran. Well?

Sir J. Well, what am I to do?

Cran. Well, what are you?

Sir J. Damn the centenary! [*Throws the "Bradshaw" angrily on the table, looks at CRANAGE, who is unconcernedly reading and smoking.*] Cranage, you might give me your advice!

Cran. You never take my advice.

Sir J. Yes I do. I took your advice over that confounded Piper's Heath business——

Cran. Yes, after being locked up all night in the sanitary laundry—— [*Chuckling.*]

Sir J. Well, I was grateful to you for getting me out of it, and hushing it up. [*CRANAGE continues to chuckle.*] You needn't laugh, Cranage. It was a dirty electioneering trick the Radicals played on me—they put the old laundry woman up to it——

Cran. Old laundry woman! What about the two young girls? Ha! Ha! [*Laughing.*] Locked up all night. Ha! Ha!

Sir J. Cranage, I was absolutely innocent as you know.

Cran. [*Laughing.*] My dear Jack, I know you were

innocent, but—[*roaring with laughter*] you looked—you looked—I think I see you now. Upon my word, Jack, I'd rather have been guilty than look as you did that morning. [*Roaring.*]

Sir J. It may be very amusing to you, Cranage, but I've nothing to reproach myself with as regards Piper's Heath. [CRANAGE *continues chuckling.*] We will drop Piper's Heath for the future, if you please.

Cran. By all means drop Piper's Heath!

[*Continues chuckling.* SIR JOHN turns to him very angrily, and is about to speak when WIDLEY, LADY ANNE'S maid, enters door left.

Widley. I beg pardon, Sir John, when her ladyship left last night, she told me to pack her trunks for two months.

Sir J. Well?

Widley. She said she'd send me a telegram this morning where to meet her——

Sir J. Well?

Widley. I haven't received any telegram, and I didn't quite know whether to—or what?

Sir J. You can let the matter rest for the time.

Widley. Yes, Sir John. [*Is going off.*]

Cran. Widley, did Lady Nancy take anything with her?

Widley. No, sir.

Cran. Not even——?

Widley. No, sir. Her ladyship said, "I haven't a moment! I must catch this train! Mrs. Fulks-Meesom will lend me all I require for the night."

Sir J. That will do, Widley. [*Exit WIDLEY.*]

Cran. That's all right.

Sir J. What's all right?

Cran. Nancy hasn't telegraphed for her things, so I daresay she has talked it over with Mrs. Fulks-Meesom, and Mrs. Fulks-Meesom has persuaded her to come home——

Sir J. Well, of course, if Nancy comes back—that places me in a difficulty.

Cran. Difficulty?

Sir J. How am I to receive her?

Cran. Wish her a pleasant good-morning, give her a kiss, and say no more about it.

Sir J. Oh, no! I shall have to make a very firm stand, and show her she can't run away from home whenever she pleases. [*CRANAGE shrugs his shoulders, grunts over his paper. SIR JOHN goes up to portrait and addresses it angrily.*] As soon as your centenary is over, I'll have you carted away upstairs! That's what will happen to you, my friend!

LORD BIRDLIP, a boy of seventeen runs in at window.

Lord B. Aunt Nancy has come back!

Sir J. Where is she?

Lord B. Down at the lodge. I was at the lodge gates, and a carriage drove up with a young lady on the box beside the coachman, and Aunt Nancy put her head out of the window and called out "Please stop, driver! I won't drive up to the house."

Sir J. Whose carriage was it?

Lord B. I don't know. It was a rummy turn-out. And such a funny, jolly old gentleman got out and said, "Vouchsafe me the honour, my lady." And he handed Aunt Nancy out, and the young lady got off the box, and then the jolly old chap said——

Cran. Chap?

Lord B. I don't know whether he's a chap or a gentleman, but he seemed very friendly with Aunt Nancy. He offered her his arm to escort her up here. But she said she didn't feel very well, and sat down outside the lodge. And then the jolly old chap said, "Shall I summon medical aid?" And Aunt Nancy said "no," and I asked her if I could do anything, but she said, "No, don't stay; I shall be up at the house directly." [*Goes up to window, looks out.*] Here she is! Hillo, Auntie, how goes it?

[*Exit at window, and off right.*]

Cran. Extraordinary story!

Sir J. Who can these people be?

[*LADY ANNE crosses the window from right to left. She marches by swiftly and proudly, with head erect.*

Sir J. There! Did you see that?

Cran. What?

Sir J. The way she stalked by that window. Cranage, you'd better tell her that after her conduct yesterday afternoon, there can be no peace or happiness in this house, until she meets my wishes with regard to the centenary.

Cran. My dear Jack——

[*LADY ANNE enters defiantly door left—an awkward pause—she stands very proudly and erectly in the doorway.*

Cran. [*After a little pause.*] Ah, my dear Nancy! [*Goes up and kisses her.*] Had a nice pleasant little trip?

Lady A. [*Looking at SIR JOHN.*] Yes, thank you, uncle. Very pleasant.

Cran. That's right. Jack was just wondering when you'd turn up, weren't you, Jack? Won't you say good morning to him?

Lady A. [*To SIR JOHN, very curtly.*] Good morning, Jack.

Sir J. [*Curtly.*] Good morning. [*A longish pause.*

Cran. How did you find your friend, Mrs. Fulks-Meesom?

Lady A. Very well indeed.

Cran. Rather late before you got to her, wasn't it?

Lady A. No, not very—at least, yes—I didn't notice the time.

Cran. I've only met Mrs. Fulks-Meesom once. That was some years ago at Denchfields. (*Hums.*) Did she mention that she knew me?

Lady A. No.

Cran. Oh, she struck me as a rather flighty, flirtatious sort of creature.

Lady A. Laura is a little careless and thoughtless.

Cran. Well, we're delighted to see you back, aren't we, Jack?

[*Nudging JACK cordially. LADY ANNE and SIR JOHN stand looking at each other very defiantly.*

Cran. Birdlip says you've brought some friends?

Lady A. Not friends, yes—I may really call him a friend.

Cran. Who?

Lady A. One of the most delightful men I ever met.

Sir J. Who?

Lady A. The Chevalier Mounteagle, the mammoth showman.

Sir J. Showman?!

Cran. How did you pick him up?

Lady A. I had to come through Grandbury on my way home this morning, and I called at the Woolpack for breakfast. The Chevaleer, as he calls himself, was staying there for the fair and—I got into conversation with him—and he was so delightful, that on thinking the matter over—I came to the conclusion that perhaps Jack is right about the centenary——

Sir J. Ah! [*Triumphantly to CRANAGE.*] You see! [*To LADY ANNE.*] Then you agree that we shall give the centenary——?

Lady A. Yes——

Sir J. And you will be present, and take an interest in it?

Lady A. Yes.

Sir J. I'm delighted to find you in this sensible frame of mind—— [*Approaching her cordially.*

Lady A. [*Very stiffly, motioning him away.*] I will come to the centenary on one condition——

Sir J. Condition?!

Lady A. That you employ the Chevaleer to carry it out.

Sir J. I can't promise that.

Lady A. You'll find him just the man you want. He's full of the most marvellous plans for the centen-

ary, and I've promised him you shall put the matter entirely in his hands.

Sir J. You shouldn't have done that without consulting me.

Lady A. But you weren't there.

Sir J. No; but I don't know that I'm very keen on the centenary, after all.

Lady A. Not keen on the centenary!? But I've promised the Chevaleer and—he's so delightful——

Sir J. I can't help his being delightful. I'm not going to waste my money on that old rascal——

[*Glancing at portrait.*]

Lady A. But you must have the centenary—mustn't he [*turning to Cranage*], Uncle Harcourt?

Cran. Jack, I think you might see the man, now that Nancy has so kindly brought him over.

Sir J. Well, I'll see him, but please remember I don't promise anything.

[*CHARLIE INSKIP enters suddenly left, with an assumption of good humour.*]

Charlie. Good morning, everybody! Ah! Lady Nancy! Delighted to find you back again.

[*Shaking hands cordially with LADY ANNE.*]

Lady A. How are you, Charlie?

Charlie. Cranage, how do?

Cran. Good morning, Charlie.

Charlie. Jack, old boy. [*Shaking hands.*] All going swimmingly, eh?

Sir J. [*Glancing at LADY ANNE.*] About as usual, Charlie. How did you get on in town?

Charlie. Oh, splendidly. Just caught the fellow. [*Glancing at LADY ANNE.*] Hope yesterday's little affair has all blown over, eh?

Sir J. [*Glancing at LADY ANNE.*] I trust so. Had your breakfast?

Charlie. Oh yes, had that in London.

Sir J. You must have got up very early?

Charlie. Yes, we had a jolly time—kept it up rather late. I couldn't sleep on account of the trains, so I

said to myself, "Here's a lovely morning! I'll get up and catch the first train—and——"

[*The CHEVALIER has entered at window behind CHARLIE. LADY ANNE shudders at his entrance. The CHEVALIER makes a profound bow all round.*

Chev. [*Advancing.*] May I join this distinguished aristocratic group?

Sir J. Is this the——?

Chev. [*Introducing himself.*] The one and only—the unique, the unapproachable, the epoch-maker. Your ladyship, will you introduce me to——[*Glancing round and fixing on CHARLIE, who is near his elbow.*] You are the proud possessor of yonder lovely——

Charlie. [*Embarrassed.*] No, no—[*getting more embarrassed under the CHEVALIER'S look*] Jack, I didn't have much breakfast—I think I'll get Dopson to give me a snack of something.

[*He goes off left very uncomfortable, making a slight gesture of sympathetic helplessness to LADY ANNE as he passes her. The CHEVALIER watches CHARLIE off. LADY ANNE watches the CHEVALIER.*

Lady A. Mr. Mounteagle, this is Sir John.

[*Introducing SIR JOHN. CHEVALIER bows profoundly to SIR JOHN, offers hand.*

Chev. Allow me to shake hands with the grandson of the illustrious warrior who now sleeps in the family vaults of this historic mansion. [*Insists on shaking hands with SIR JOHN, who does it reluctantly.*] My own grandsire played a similar part when we were in a tight place at Waterloo. The gallant baronet's grandsire saves the situation at Inkerman. My own grandsire saves the situation at Waterloo! [*Turning to CRANAGE.*] Another member of the illustrious one's family, I presume?

Lady A. [*Introducing.*] My uncle, Mr. Harcourt Cranage.

Chev. [*In low voice to her.*] Any title—to speak of?

Lady A. [*Nettled.*] My uncle is the third son of the fifth Earl of Birdlip.

Chev. I thank you. I thank you. Always like to know exactly where I am with regard to titles, so as not to put my foot in it. [*Beaming on CRANAGE.*] Delighted to make your acquaintance, sir. [*Insists on shaking hands with CRANAGE, who shows great reluctance. Looks round the room, catches sight of the portrait over fireplace.*] Is that the illustrious one himself?

Sir J. That is my grandfather, but——

Chev. Recognized him at a glance! The martial bearing; the piercing eagle eye; the sabre-cut across the forehead; the deadly determination to do or die; the choice assortment of medals, all proclaim him to be none other than the redoubtable hero of Inkerman—what's-his-name Kellond. Should have known him anywhere! [*Addressing the picture.*] We will render you more than justice, illustrious warrior! We will add fresh laurels to your scutcheon! We will enshrine——

Sir J. [*Interrupting.*] Yes, but before we go any further——

Chev. One moment, Sir John. Let me pay a tribute of eloquent silence to the great protagonist. [*Stands silent for a few seconds in front of the picture, then turns.*] And now I will briefly recount what her ladyship and I have decided to do for the old hero. [*Glancing at LADY ANNE and winking slightly at her.*

Sir J. You must first of all please understand, Mr. Mounteagle——

Chev. “Tchevaleer” if you please, Sir John. “We” prefer it.

[*CRANAGE has been quietly watching, showing keen interest and amusement. He now comes forward with a sharp, cross-questioning, determined air.*

Cran. Where did you obtain this title of Chevalier or if you prefer it, Chevaleer?

[*Looking keenly at CHEVALIER through pince-nez.*

Chev. I bestowed it upon myself, in recognition of distinguished services. The many-headed took kindly to it, so if all goes well with my new Paradise of Illusion I shall take a somewhat higher rank, probably that of right honourable.

Cran. These distinguished services? Exploits in chivalry?

Chev. Chivalry? I don't quite tumble——

Cran. The word Chevalier, as you are doubtless aware, comes from the Latin Caballus——

Chev. Caballus! Quite so! I'd forgotten that!

Cran. French Chevalier, Italian Cavaliere, Spanish Caballero——

Chev. Caballero! Whatcheero!

Cran. Ergo, Mr. Mounteagle, in order to lay any claim to the title of Chevaleer you must be able to point to some notable feats, either of horsemanship, or of chivalry towards ladies. Do you follow me?

Chev. Perfectly.

Cran. Well now, which shall it be? Horsemanship? or Chivalry towards ladies?

Chev. Both—all three—I should say all thousand and one.

Cran. Thousand and one what?

Chev. Feats of chivalry towards ladies.

Cran. Let's hear something about them.

Chev. What?! Kiss and tell?! Boast of my prowess over the soft, defenceless, yielding fair? Me?! No, no! Honourable Sir Cranage [*Smiling and slightly winking at LADY ANNE.*] I have had my triumphs, but—a discreet veil of silence, eh, my lady?

Cran. Very well, we'll pass your feats of chivalry. What about your feats of horsemanship?

Chev. Ah! There!——

Cran. Tell us all about them. Where did they take place?

Chev. In every town of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. I am the sole proprietor of eight steam gallopers. I am not only a Tchevaleer myself, but wherever I go, I rouse all the juvenile population to become Tchevaleers, and to perform the most daring feats of horsemanship, without the least danger to life or limb. Ergo, Tchevalero, primo, first-ratum, tiptopum, meum est, pro bono publico—do you follow me?

Cran. Scarcely——

Sir J. What will the expense of this centenary be, Chevaleer?

Chev. Expense?! You wish, of course, to make it a regular epoch-making affair?

Sir J. I don't know about that——

Chev. Epoch-making! Or “we” cannot be connected with it. It wouldn't answer my purpose. “We” make it a rule never to be connected with anything that isn't epoch-making! [*Appealing to* LADY ANNE.] I understood your ladyship to say that this centenary was to be distinctly epoch-making?

[*Very slightly winking at* LADY ANNE.]

Lady A. Yes—certainly.

Sir J. But how much will it cost?

Chev. A mere paltry two thousand pounds.

Sir J. Two thousand pounds!

Chev. More or less.

Sir J. Thank you. I'll leave the matter for the present. Good-morning.

Chev. Good-morning? [*Appealing to* LADY ANNE.] My lady, am I to be thus ignominiously shunted? My lady?!

Lady A. Jack, you can't send Mr. Mounteagle away like this. I've promised him——

Sir J. I'm very sorry, but on thinking the matter over I've decided not to have a centenary.

Lady A. What?! [*Desperate.*] We must have a centenary now! I'm quite determined that we'll have a centenary!

Sir J. Very well, my dear Nancy, I'm quite determined that we won't.

Lady A. It's perfectly monstrous not to have a centenary, after all this talk about it. Uncle Harcourt, do persuade him how unreasonable he is!

Sir J. Cranage, do for Heaven's sake make her realize—now once for all [*very decidedly*], I will not have a centenary.

Lady A. [*More decidedly.*] Then I'll have one of my own!

Sir J. Then you defy me?

Lady A. Not at all. I'm simply carrying out your own idea—I'll have a magnificent centenary—I'll invite everybody—and—you'll be obliged to take part in it—he's your own grandfather—and—[*Getting a little hysterical. Seating herself, very determined and defiantly.*] Mr. Mounteagle, will you please take my orders for the centenary?

Sir J. Mr. Mounteagle will please do nothing of the kind—Cranage—really I—What is a man to do? It's heartbreaking!

Chev. [*Very soft and insinuating.*] Will the gallant baronet permit me to ease the domestic collar for him, as it were? And perhaps my right hon. friend [*appealing to CRANAGE*] will lend a hand with the ointment. And if the fair lady herself will kindly wreath her face in a few smiles when she looks at her husband—and not sit quite so bolt upright. [*She tries to obey CHEVALIER and changes her attitude.*] I thank you, my lady, I thank you. And now, Sir John, as national expectations are fixed upon you with regard to this centenary, it would be unbecoming of you to leave your illustrious ancestor in the lurch. It would be unworthy a baronet. And you, my lady, having pledged yourself that this historic pageant shall be placed in my hands—having pledged yourself—?

Lady A. Yes, certainly.

Chev. I thank you. Of course I would never presume to keep a lady to her word. Still, having pledged yourself, I'm sure the gallant baronet will not allow you to back out. On my own part—I will—well, there Sir John, we will not bandy words about petty affairs of sordid cash—leave the doughty old veteran in my hands, and I will fix him up handsomely to the tune of fifteen hundred pounds, more or less. My lady, do you agree to that figure?

Lady A. Yes. Jack, I've given in to you about the centenary. The least you can do is to give in to me, and accept Mr. Mounteagle's very reasonable offer.

Sir J. What do you think, Cranage?

Cran. Fifteen hundred pounds? Absurd! Out of all question!

Chev. My right hon. friend doesn't know the scale of magnificence upon which "we" shall operate.

Cran. Scale of magnificence?! What do you propose to do?

Chev. [*Takes out a huge pocket-book and pencil.*] I have here jotted down a few items that her ladyship and I thought would prove attractive to the many-headed.

Cran. Let's hear them!

Chev. [*Reading from pocket-book.*] "The Tchevaleer Mounteagle's Mammoth Menagerie, including the performing snakes; the man-eating tiger; the playful pumas; and Vestal Virginia, the lady lion-tamer, who, like some female Daniel, reposes in the lion's den, with her twin babes in her arms, for an hour at every performance.

Cran. Appetising—for the lions.

Chev. [*Winking at him.*] It's a fake. No danger. [*Reading.*] "The great Mysterious Professor Snewin, with his Temple of Magic. Pinniger's Mafeking Monkeys. Nokes's Moral Waxworks."

Cran. What are moral waxworks?

Chev. Groups of moving waxworks arranged to

impart a complete knowledge of Scriptural and English history, and at the same time to enforce a wholesome moral.

Cran. How is the moral enforced?

Chev. My old friend Abel Nokes, the converted showman, personally conducts every party, and delivers an improving lecture in front of every group.

Cran. I'm glad our morals are to be looked after.

Chev. [*Reading.*] "The Tchevaleer Mounteagle's Monster Circodrome, with flying trapeze acts; airships, the sword swallower, *and* the six-legged donkey. Turvey's phantasmagoroscope. Bunyard's genuine human freaks; including the living skeleton; the boneless Hottentot; the giant fat lady; the tattooed midgets; *and* the hairless blue family."

Cran. That sounds like a dainty dish.

Chev. The many-headed dote on freaks. We must pamper the many-headed. [*Reading.*] "The phonovito-pictoscope. Gollop's switchback gondolas. The Tchevaleer Mounteagle's new fifty horse-power four-a-breast steam-gallop—"

Lady A. Oh, please don't have any of those dreadful roundabouts. I dislike them so much.

Chev. You'll like this one, my lady. It will have the volume of twelve full orchestras, and will throb and boom forth the choicest classical music; thus serving to elevate the taste of the many-headed within a radius of four miles. [*LADY ANNE shudders with apprehension.*] Its effect will be overpowering. [*Coughs. Reading.*] "For the first time in England the Tchevaleer Mounteagle's New Paradise of Illusion. Myrioramas, Panoramas, Cokershies, razzle-dazzles, roley poley, love-in-a-tub [*shutting up pocket-book*], etcetera, etcetera. [*Suddenly.*] Ah! I'd forgotten!

Sir J. What?

Chev. Fireworks! The fifth of November! We will balloon ourselves on fireworks, eh?

Sir J. Yes, but—

Enter DOPSON, left.

Dops. I beg pardon, Sir John. The showmen are waiting in the morning-room.

Cran. Showmen?

[The CHEVALIER pays keen attention.]

Sir J. Some showmen that came very early this morning when I was writing out the telegram to Mrs. Fulks-Meesom. *[LADY ANNE shows surprise and alarm.]* I'd forgotten all about them. All right, Dopson, I'll come to them.

[Exit DOPSON left. SIR JOHN is following him.]

Lady A. Jack, did you send a telegram to Laura this morning?

Sir J. Yes. I was getting anxious about you.

[LADY ANNE shows great alarm.]

Chev. Then I take it, Sir John, the centenary is left in my hands?!

Sir J. Oh, no. Fifteen hundred pounds is too high. I must get another estimate. Cranage, will you come? I want your advice.

[Going off left.]

Chev. But, Sir John——

Sir J. Wait here, Mr. Chevaleer, till I've seen these other gentlemen of your calling. Come along, Cranage.

[Exit SIR JOHN left. CRANAGE is following him, and the CHEVALIER is following CRANAGE.]

Cran. Wait here, my polyhippic friend!

Chev. Polyhippic?!

Cran. Do you deny you are polyhippic?

Chev. Most emphatically. I must ask you to withdraw——

Cran. I repeat, "polyhippic!" "Polyhippic!"

[Exit left.]

Chev. *[Disconcerted.]* Polyhippic? Polyhippic!

[LADY ANNE on the intelligence of the telegram has shown great concern; she stands as if]

dazed. The CHEVALIER approaches her quietly from behind.

Chev. My lady, if I might crave another favour——

Lady A. [*Staring at him in a kind of dreamy horror.*]

Well——

Chev. These showmen are my humble friends, Professor Snewin and Abel Nokes—very worthy souls, but mere average, ordinary, human grovellers.

Lady A. Well?

Chev. If you would softly steal in upon Sir John and kindly point out to him that Nokes and Snewin are utterly incapable of doing justice to this great national spectacle; that the mammoth epoch-maker [*pointing to himself*] alone is qualified, eh, my lady?

[*Beaming and winking at her.*]

Lady A. [*More frightened.*] Very well, I'll try.

Chev. I thank you, my lady.

Lady A. You do see that I'm doing my best for you, don't you?

Chev. My lady [*beaming and winking at her*],

“For ever will I bless the auspicious hour

When on my raptured soul——”

Lady A. Oh please don't look at me like that! I'll see Sir John, and try to persuade him—oh—don't look at me like that!

[*He opens the door left for her; she looks at him in a dazed, frightened way, and goes off. He looks after her perplexed; closes the door slowly; comes very much perplexed into the centre of the room.*]

Chev. [*Perplexed.*] I've magnetized her! I've cast a spell over her in some way! But how the devil have I done it? [*Shows great perplexity, is struck with an idea, takes his pocket looking-glass out of his pocket, holds it in front of himself, regards himself admiringly, puts his hand through his hair, poses, smiles admiringly at himself.*] I have had my triumphs—if this should prove to be my Waterloo!

[*Smiles approvingly at himself—puts glass*

in pocket—smiles and kisses his hand at the door left where LADY ANNE has gone off.

LORD BIRDLIP *looks in at window, sees CHEVALIER and calls off.*

Lord B. Yes, Miss Mounteagle, here he is. [*Beckoning off.*] Your daughter was wondering what had become of you. [*JUNO appears at the window.*] Come in!

Chev. Come in, my popinjay. [*Turning to LORD BIRDLIP.*] Who is our youthful satellite? Some scion of this noble house?

Juno. This is Lord Birdlip—

Chev. [*Impressed.*] Lord Birdlip. Any relation of our worthy president? [*Pointing to portrait.*]

Lord B. No, I'm Lady Nancy's nephew. My name's Cranage.

Chev. Same as that of the somewhat cocky old gentleman who tried to flummox me just now?

Lord B. Yes; he's my great-uncle and guardian. I say, your daughter has been telling me all about your gallopers and circuses. [*Gazing at him with great admiration.*] You must have a tremendously jolly time of it.

Chev. We do ourselves passing well.

Lord B. Wandering about from one nice town to another in beautiful yellow wagons—nothing to do but to shoot at bottles, and go in roundabouts, and put on all your splendid toggery and say, "Walk up! Walk up." I do envy you!

Chev. And well you may, my lord!

Lord B. It has always been the dream of my life to be a showman!

Chev. My lord, your tastes do you credit. Would that all of your class had the same innocent, healthy instincts!

Enter DOPSON left.

Dopson. [*To CHEVALIER.*] Sir John wishes to see you in the morning-room.

Chev. "We" will attend upon Sir John. [*Exit DOPSON.*] My lord, if you are disposed to join our profession——

Lord B. I should like to talk it over with you ——

Chev. With pleasure. Juno, my child, entertain our protégé with a few vivid sketches of our happy, careless existence—paint its joyous birdlike freedom, its simple pleasures and sorrows. Above all, do not forget that under our splendid toggery, as his lordship justly terms it, there often gurgitates a broken heart, etcetera, etcetera.

[Beams and smiles at them, slightly winks at JUNO, exit left.]

Juno. Father's a wonderful man, isn't he?

Lord B. Seems a rattling good sort of chap. I like him.

Juno. Do you? I'm so glad. Don't you think he has a beautiful flow of language?

Lord B. Gorgeous, where did he get it all from?

Juno. Oh, most of it came quite natural to him.

Lord B. No!

Juno. Yes. Even as a boy he was always talking poetry. He couldn't help it. And when he grew up, he thought it would be a magnificent idea to keep up a constant flow of eloquence in business. So he used to buy all the novels at the railway bookstalls, and cut out all the best long words, and learn them off by heart. That's how it is he's such a scholar.

Lord B. Shows the advantage of educating yourself instead of going to school and the 'varsity. [*Suddenly.*] I've got such a splendid idea!

Juno. What?!

Lord B. If my people would only give me a start as your father's partner, instead of sending me back to Eton——

Juno. That would be lovely. But do you think you'd like it?

Lord B. Just my cut. I always was fond of animals, especially horses and dogs. And I don't mind snakes. If I went in for it, what would my duties be?

Juno. You could help me in the accounts.

Lord B. I'm a duffer at figures.

Juno. I could teach you.

Lord B. Ye-es. I think I should soon pick it up. And when we enter a town if there was a nice smart little cob, I could trot him up and down, and show him off, eh?

Juno. Yes. And sometimes we have to travel all night.

Lord B. What for?

Juno. To be ready for the fair at the next town.

Lord B. All night, eh? I say, I'm dead nuts on that!

Juno. Yes, and sometimes it's so cold and you're half asleep in the corner, and you go on, jog, jog, jog, all the night; and then you see the sun rise; and the coffee and bacon is delicious!

Lord B. I should think it was. It makes me hungry to think of it. Do you often do that?

Juno. Not very often now. Years ago, before father was rich——

Lord B. Is he rich? I beg your pardon. I only wanted to know; in case my folks would be sensible and let me join him?

Juno. Oh, I wish they would. Yes, father's very rich now. He's a mammoth proprietor. So we go to bed ourselves, and send the gallopers on with the men.

Lord B. Seems a pity to do that. And let them have the sunrise, and the bacon and coffee, and all the jolly things. I say, if I chuck this and go in for the show business—couldn't you and I take on the gallopers?—If you'd trust yourself to me—I'd be awfully careful of you, I would, indeed——

Enter, left, shown in by DOPSON, MRS. FULKS-MEESOM, about thirty; handsome, dressed very quietly.

Dopson. I'll tell her ladyship you're here.

[*Exit DOPSON.*

Lord B. How d'ye do, Mrs. Fulks-Meesom? You don't remember me. I'm Birdlip.

Mrs. F.-M. Oh yes. [*Shaking hands.*] How d'ye do?
[*Takes out a telegram and studies it.*

Lord B. [*To JUNO.*] You were asking about that stone building in the Park—

Juno. Yes. What did you say its name was?

Lord B. The Pavilion. I thought you said you'd like to look over it. [JUNO looks surprised.

Juno. I said, "I wonder what they keep inside it?"

Lord B. It's quite empty at present, but it's well worth seeing.

Juno. I should like to see it.

Lord B. I'm just going there; we might stroll down together. [*At window.*] It's thoroughly well worth seeing.

[*Exeunt LORD BIRDLIP and JUNO at window.*

MRS. FULKS-MEESOM has been studying the telegram. LADY ANNE enters door left, excitedly—half in tears.

Lady A. [*Comes in, goes excitedly to MRS. FULKS-MEESOM.*] Laura, I'm so glad you've come!

[*Kisses MRS. FULKS-MEESOM affectionately and bursts into tears.*

Mrs. F.-M. [*Does not respond very warmly.*] My dear Nancy, what is it?

Lady A. I never felt so glad to see anybody. [*Has another little fit of sobbing.*] You've come just in time!

Mrs. F.-M. In time for what?

Lady A. [Again embracing MRS. FULKS-MEESOM affectionately.] Sit down! I'll tell you all about it.

[They sit down, MRS. FULKS-MEESOM very reluctantly.]

Mrs. F.-M. All about what?

Lady A. I'm in the most dreadful position——

Mrs. F.-M. Is it anything to do with this telegram from Sir John? [Giving the telegram.]

Lady A. [Takes telegram, reads.] "Trust you will not go to Beaulieu with Nancy. Please tell her I shall expect her home this evening without fail." Yes—that's it. [Giving back telegram.]

Mrs. F.-M. I couldn't understand it. I was going to telegraph to Sir John for an explanation, and just then Mr. Spilsby came in——

Lady A. Who's Mr. Spilsby?

Mrs. F.-M. Our new curate. I asked his advice. It happened he was going to Longham this morning to see his old tutor's mother. And as he would be passing Kellond, he kindly offered to call here and make inquiries of Sir John. Wasn't it sweet of him? And then I remembered that Isabel Cardington lived at Longham, and I thought I'd go and see her, and look in on the way.

Lady A. How kind of you, dearest. I never needed a friend so much. Oh Laura, you've been in one or two awkward situations in your time——

Mrs. F.-M. Yes, dear. That's all quite past. There's no need to allude to——

Lady A. No, no, but still *you* can help *me* now!

Mrs. F.-M. [Rather chilly.] Of course, dear, anything I can do without forfeiting my self-respect or——

Lady A. Self-respect? How long——?

Mrs. F.-M. Or failing in my humble efforts to——

Lady A. Humble efforts?! Laura, what has happened?

Mrs. F.-M. Well, dear, if you can give me some explanation of this without compromising yourself, or placing me in any false position——

Lady A. Of course, dear, I won't place you in any false position. I mean—I want you to let Jack think—well—that I stayed with you last night.

Mrs. F.-M. You stayed with me last night! My dear Nancy——!

Lady A. You know I'd do as much for you. In fact I have—you remember when you came to me in Edinburgh, about Captain Bulpit——

Mrs. F.-M. It's rather ungenerous of you to remind me of my past errors of judgment——

Lady A. Errors of judgment?!

Mrs. F.-M. Nobody is more willing than I to acknowledge that they were errors of judgment, and nobody is more anxious to atone for them. But it isn't quite kind of you to rake up every little——

Lady A. I don't want to rake up anything. I was very glad to be some little service to you when you needed——

Mrs. F.-M. Yes, dear, if you will insist on recalling——

Lady A. No, dear. All I ask you to do now is just to—just to—— Oh Laura, I'm in the most frightful fix!

Mrs. F.-M. [*Looking at the telegram.*] Yes. So it seems.

Lady A. And it's the most absurd affair; it's nothing at all!

Mrs. F.-M. If it's nothing at all, why not tell Sir John instead of asking me to sacrifice my convictions and——

Lady A. Convictions? Laura, what *is* the matter with you? How long have you been like this?!

Mrs. F.-M. The whole of the past fortnight. Ever since a conversation I had with Mr. Spilsby in the new cemetery at twilight, I have felt my whole character silently undergoing a complete change. [*LADY ANNE makes an impatient gesture.*] My dear Nancy, it's useless to shrug your shoulders. There must be something

very remarkable in a man who can change your whole character in a fortnight!

Lady A. Yes, there must be! Well, never mind Mr. Spilsby—

Mrs. F.-M. Oh, don't say that! That was why I pressed him to wait for me—

Lady A. Wait for you?! Where?!

Mrs. F.-M. At the railway station. I left him earnestly engaged with the booking-office clerk. I'm so glad Mr. Spilsby happens to be here—

Lady A. Why?

Mrs. F.-M. When I got this telegram I had a curious kind of instinct that he might be wanted—

Lady A. Wanted? What for?!

Mrs. F.-M. Now, dear, if you are in any position where you need the strong firm guidance of a man with an iron will and an outspoken tongue, one who will not hesitate to expose all your miserable weaknesses to yourself—

Lady A. No, I'm not! I'm not! Laura, I assure you, it's really nothing. I'll tell you how it happened—

Mrs. F.-M. Perhaps I'd better not hear—

Lady A. Yes, dear. Laura, I did expect a little sympathy from you—

Mrs. F.-M. My dear, I feel all possible sympathy for you. At the same time I cannot imagine how you could have placed yourself in a position where—

Lady A. Yes, dear. I'll tell you everything, and then I'm sure you'll help me.

Mrs. F.-M. Of course any help that lies in my power—

Lady A. That's all I ask. [*Gets MRS. FULKS-MEESOM seated again.*] You remember Charlie Inskip—

Mrs. F.-M. I met him once or twice in my trivial foolish days. [*Sighs very deeply.*]

Lady A. [*Looks at her.*] Yes. Well, ever since my

cousin Milly threw him over, Charlie has imagined himself to be very much in love with me——

Mrs. F.-M. [*Quickly.*] I'd rather not hear any more—— [*About to rise.*]

Lady A. Yes, yes, you must. Well, yesterday Jack and I had one of our regular field-days of rowing. [*MRS. FULKS-MEESOM sighs very deeply.* *LADY ANNE looks at her.*] We began at breakfast about the new patent toast-rack——

Mrs. F.-M. How awful to think, that those who have solemnly vowed to love and cherish each other through life, should begin the day by bickering about a toast-rack! [*Sighs very deeply.*]

Lady A. Yes. [*Looks at her.*] Well, we did bicker. We bickered all the morning, and all the afternoon, and just before dinner I quite lost my temper, and left the house, fully intending to come on and stay the night with you——

Mrs. F.-M. Well, where did you stay the night? No, please don't tell me! [*Rising.*]

Lady A. Yes, dear.

Mrs. F.-M. No—I'd rather not hear.

Lady A. You must hear the whole story now. I insist! Please!

Mrs. F.-M. [*Sits down in a resigned way, sighs very deeply.*] Well, where did you stay the night?

[*The CHEVALIER'S voice is heard outside the window. LADY ANNE shows great fright. The CHEVALIER, SIR JOHN, and CRANAGE cross the window from left to right; they are in animated conversation.*]

Chev. [*As he comes in view pointing off right.*] Yes, on yonder grassy slope. An ideal spot for fire-works!

Sir J. Yes, I'll think it over. Get me out an estimate for each separate item. Cranage, one moment! I want to ask you——

[*SIR JOHN links his arm in CRANAGE'S, and draws CRANAGE off right, leaving the*]

CHEVALIER *standing outside the window, notebook in hand. The CHEVALIER happens to glance inside the room, and sees LADY ANNE, who has moved a few steps up in apprehension of her husband's entrance.*

Chev. Ah, my lady! The gallant baronet seems disposed to yield to your gracious entreaties. And if you will continue to use your influence on "our" behalf——

Lady A. I've told you I will do all I can for you. Surely that's enough.

Chev. Quite, quite. I shall polish up his reputation. [*Pointing to portrait.*] I shall make him feel proud of himself before I've done with him. [*Turning to MRS. FULKS-MEESOM.*] Another connection of the illustrious——

Lady A. [*Severely.*] No.

Chev. Only a friend, I presume. I see—I see!

[*Nods, beams, and winks at MRS. FULKS-MEESOM.*]

Mrs. F.-M. [*To LADY ANNE.*] Who is this?

Chev. [*Introducing himself.*] The one and only! The unique! The unapproachable! The epoch-maker! [*Beams on them, they shrink a little and show some embarrassment.*] Wish to be alone?! Wish to indulge in a little irresponsible feminine gossip? I understand. [*Beams and winks at them.*] Pardon my intrusion. Celestial creatures, I salute you! I salute you!

[*Kissing his hand to them. Goes off kissing his hand to them. Exit at window and off right.*]

Mrs. F.-M. Who is that appalling person? Does he know you?

Lady A. No—yes—he was staying at the Woolpack at Grandbury last night——

Mrs. F.-M. Woolpack? Grandbury? Were you staying there?

Lady A. Yes, I'd lost my last train to you.

Mrs. F.-M. Lost your last train! Oh! I prefer not to hear any more.

Lady A. You must in case Jack questions you.

Mrs. F.-M. Questions me? You surely don't wish to drag me into this miserable——

Lady A. There's nothing to be dragged into. If you'll only tell John——

Mrs. F.-M. I couldn't. I'm deeply sorry for you— And anything that I can do to help you——

Lady A. Well, help me then——

Mrs. F.-M. Anything in my power—— [*Going left.*]

Lady A. But if you meet Jack and he asks you——

Mrs. F.-M. I shall know nothing.

Lady A. But you must know——

Mrs. F.-M. I must know——?

Lady A. That I stayed with you last night.

Mrs. F.-M. I couldn't. I couldn't. [*Going left.*] Mr. Spilsby is waiting for me.

Lady A. Please don't go that way.

Mrs. F.-M. Why not?

Lady A. You might meet Jack. Laura, if you won't tell Jack what I wish, will you please keep out of his way for the next month or two, until he has forgotten all about it?

Mrs. F.-M. [*Considering.*] There could be no great wrong in that——

Lady A. No——

Mrs. F.-M. I'll consult Mr. Spilsby about it.

[*Going left.*]

Lady A. You won't give me away to Mr. Spilsby?

Mrs. F.-M. Give you away?! Give you away?!

Lady A. I don't mean that. There's nothing to be given away.

Mrs. F.-M. Then why should you mind my talking over the whole matter in a friendly way with Mr. Spilsby? I'll fetch him. [*Going left.*]

Lady A. [*Arresting her.*] No! No! No!

Mrs. F.-M. You see, when I'm ready to help you you won't let me——

Lady A. I don't want Mr. Spilsby.

Mrs. F.-M. My dear Nancy, what do you want?

Lady A. Would you mind stepping into my little sitting-room [*indicating door right*] and waiting there till I can get hold of Jack—and then when I've got him will you go out by the window, and cross the lawn, and through the kitchen-garden——

Mrs. F.-M. Kitchen-garden?!

Lady A. And by the stables——

Mrs. F.-M. Stables?!

Lady A. Yes, and there you are on your way to the station.

Mrs. F.-M. [*Reluctantly.*] Kitchen-garden—stables! It's rather a horrid thing to do. Still, to show you how anxious I am to help you——

Lady A. [*Opening door right trying to get her off.*] Yes, dear—make haste, Jack may be here at any moment——

Mrs. F.-M. [*At door.*] Oh, Nancy, how could you be so foolish, so utterly lost to all sense of——

Lady A. Yes, dear, yes, I fully recognize all that.

[*Gets MRS. FULKS-MEESOM off right, and shuts door, breathes a little easier, goes to sofa, sits down a little exhausted.*]

Charlie. [*Looks at door left.*] Well, how are things looking now? [*With an attempt to be cheery.*]

Lady A. Things looking?!

Charlie. You know, Nancy, whatever happens I shall see you through.

Lady A. See me through?! To where?

Charlie. I know it's awful—and dear old Jack too—last thing in the world I'd do, would be to hurt Jack's feelings—that's one of the peculiarities of my position in this house, while being quite devoted to you, I yet wish to remain the best of friends with Jack. It's a beastly position to be in.

[*LADY ANNE makes an indignant gesture and exclamation.*]

Charlie. Yes. Well, let's tot up the situation. Did

you see how that showman chap spotted me the moment he came in?

Lady A. No. I don't think he recognized you.

Charlie. Oh, yes. He dropped right down on me, and he looked at me in such a peculiar way. By Jove, made me feel quite dizzy——

Lady A. Yes, I know that dreadful look. And if he gets the centenary [*shudders*] Charlie, I can't have that awful man here for the next three weeks with the consciousness that he knows—oh, what can we do with him?

Charlie. I don't know! I feel I ought to horsewhip him? Yes! let me find the blackguard and horsewhip him!

[*The CHEVALIER has entered at window to overhear the last sentence.*]

Chev. Horsewhip him! Horsewhip who? Can I be of service? My lady, in return for all your favours can I administer a sound corporal castigation to some shivering dastard? [*Looking at CHARLIE.*]

Lady A. No, thank you. It's nothing—nothing——

Chev. [*Looking at CHARLIE.*] There is somebody to be castigated?

Charlie. No—no—no.

Chev. [*To LADY ANNE.*] This gentleman's name?

Lady A. Mr. Charles Inskip.

[*CHEVALIER looks CHARLIE up and down.*]

Chev. Any connection of the doughty one?

[*Referring to portrait.*]

Lady A. No.

Chev. [*Looking at CHARLIE.*] Friend of the family, eh?

Lady A. Yes.

Charlie. [*A little pompously.*] I don't think I have the pleasure of your acquaintance, sir?

Chev. No, sir, but I trust you will have. [*LADY ANNE and CHARLIE look at him fearfully.*] Pardon my intrusion again, my lady. We have crossed the Rubicon! We have done the trick! The worthy baronet has

placed the centenary in my hands, and now, my lady, if I may rely upon your continued favour [*winking at her*] and perhaps this gentleman—pardon me, what name?

Charlie. Inskip. I say, Mr. Showman, have we ever met before?

Chev. [*Winks and beams at him.*] Have we ever met before? [*Winking at him.*]

Charlie. Then you do remember me? [*The CHEVALIER winks at him. CHARLIE gets more and more uncomfortable. To LADY ANNE.*] I think I'll see how dear old Jack is getting on.

[*Slinks off at back, making a hopeless gesture at LADY ANNE.*]

Chev. [*Rubbing his hands gleefully.*] And now, my lady, we are fairly launched on the centenary. I shall have to be on the spot. There is a pretty little residence yclept the Pavilion. It seems to be adapted to my requirements. With your permission my daughter and I will occupy it. Have you any objection?

Lady A. No—no—at least—

Chev. We will move in our belongings to-night. I find the gallant baronet is somewhat niggardly in the vital matter of fireworks. I look to you, my lady, to inspire him with more generous ideas—

Lady A. [*Thoroughly frightened, seizes his hand; CHEVALIER looks at her.*] How much do you know?

Chev. How much do I know?

Lady A. Yes, how much do you know? Tell me!

[*MRS. FULKS-MEESOM enters right.*]

Mrs. F.-M. My dear Nancy, I've been thinking—

[*Looking at CHEVALIER.*]

[*The CHEVALIER has recovered from his wonder at LADY ANNE'S question, and he now turns round on LADY ANNE with an assumption of great knowingness, and says triumphantly*] Ha! Ha! Ha! [*Turns to MRS. FULKS-MEESOM.*] Ha! Ha! Ha! How much do I know?

[He stands between the two women. LADY ANNE regards him with terror, MRS. FULKS-MEESOM with amazement. The CHEVALIER turns round from one to the other, ejaculating a cunning Ha! Ha! to each, beaming and winking at them alternately. LADY ANNE thoroughly frightened, rushes round to MRS. FULKS-MEESOM for protection, and draws her off door right, closing it after them. The CHEVALIER stands puzzled in the middle of the room.]

Chev. How much do I know? [Stands puzzled.]

SLOW CURTAIN.

(Three weeks pass between Acts II. and III.)



ACT III.

SCENE. *The Pavilion in Kellond Park.—A room in a classical stone structure of the Adam's period. At the back is a large semi-oval recess, with a door in the centre and windows on each side, looking out upon the park. The recess is flanked by a space of wall on each side, with windows also looking out upon the park. Old white linen blinds to the windows. One of the windows is open. On each side, right and left, is a wall harmonizing with the recess and back walls. A door in the centre of wall right, a door in the centre of wall left. A stone seat about two feet high runs all round the recess except at the door. A stove has been hastily erected on the left side below door, and its pipe is carried through the wall. A small kitchen table down stage on the left side; on it are rough crockery and household utensils; a few pieces of rough furniture about the place showing that it is temporarily used for a living-room. Scattered about the place are all kinds of showmen's litter; material, implements, dresses, etc.; sides and pieces of shooting galleries, a wooden horse, and a huge bird from a roundabout, a drum right, and another drum down stage a little to the left. At the back right are two wax figures representing Antony and Cleopatra; they are dressed in regal incongruous robes, and are staring helplessly at the audience. A yard or so away from them, seated on the floor, with her*

back against the stone seat, right, is another wax figure representing Mary Queen of Scots. She is also dressed incongruously, and is lolling on one side; her head is rather loose, and falls forward; she is gazing at the floor. The whole place is in considerable confusion. The time is five on an afternoon in early November. The light has just begun to fade as the curtain rises, and there is a faint sunset glow showing through the trees. As the act progresses the glow spreads into a winter sunset and dies out as the night falls. A fire is alight in the stove, and throws its rays into the room. Discover JUNO writing at table. She blots letter and reads it.



DEAR Lord Birdlip, I am so proud that you love me and think me worthy to be your wife. I have not yet told father of your proposal—

The CHEVALIER enters at back.

Juno. [Rises confused.] Well—did you find out what was the matter with the new steam-galopper?

Chev. Yes, some of the organ pipes have got damaged on the journey down. I've set all the men on to repair them. *[Coming up to her. She tries to hide the letter.]* Hillo! A letter?! *[JUNO looks shamefaced and turns away.]* What's this?! Why shrink from the paternal eye? *[She makes an offer of the letter, and then half withdraws it.]* Come! Come! No secrets from the progenitor!

[JUNO gives him the letter with some reluctance and stands shamefaced while he reads it.]

Juno. I won't send it—if you think I ought not.

Chev. Why not? Here is nothing unmanly! Nothing to becrimson a father's cheek with shame. *[Gives her back the letter, which she puts quietly into*

pocket.] So ho! We have captivated the young lordling, the proud descendant of a hundred belted earls. Righto! I guessed as much.

Juno. Did you? How did you know?

Chev. I have watched the young patrician in dalliance with you. I have observed a peculiar bashfulness which, coupled with his frequent presents to myself of my own prime Maduro cigars, all plainly showed that he wished to place his coronet at your feet.

Juno. But father, his friends—the Honourable Cranage—

Chev. The Honourable Cranage will no doubt prove a malignant obstructionist in this, as he has already done in the fireworks. I shall have to conspueer Cranage.

Juno. Conspuer?

Chev. A term I have imported from Paris. Ah, that reminds me—did our young lordling find out the meaning of polyhippic?

Juno. Yes—he says it's something to do with many horses.

Chev. Many horses? Polyhippic? Many horses! Righto, Honourable Cranage!

Juno. Father, the Honourable Cranage was sneering all through your oration last night.

Chev. Envy! Green-eyed, jaundiced, gangrened envy! Knows he can't do it himself. That's the secret of Cranage's insidious machinations against me.

Juno. Yes, but father—don't you think you might tone your eloquence down a little?

Chev. Tone my eloquence down?!

Juno. I often watch the people, and I don't think they understand you.

Chev. That's the beauty of it! That's the secret of my success with the gaping populace. The loftier my flights the less they understand them—in fact the less I understand them myself. Did you hear them cheering last night?

Juno. Yes. Father, is it really true about your grandfather?

Chev. It is metaphorically true, my child. Ask no more. Going to give them another oration to-night—my version of Waterloo.

Juno. Yes, father, but the Honourable Cranage doesn't like your version of Waterloo, and he is Lord Birdlip's guardian. And if you offend him——

Chev. Leave Cranage in my hands. I will deal with Cranage.

[Gives one of the drums a vigorous bang with the drumstick. At that moment LADY ANNE, pale and frightened, looks in at window.]

Juno. Father! Her ladyship!

Lady A. *[Through the window.]* Mr. Mounteagle, I must speak to you——

Chev. "We" are at your service, my lady.

Lady A. Sir John and Mr. Cranage are coming to see you about the centenary.

Chev. "We" will receive them.

Lady A. They had no idea you were making such extensive arrangements——

Chev. Epoch-making, my lady! Simply epoch-making!

Lady A. But the expense—couldn't you cut down some of the attractions?

Chev. Impossible, I fear—My reputation is at stake.

Lady A. But Sir John says he will not go on with the centenary unless you do.

Chev. In that case, my lady, I shall rely on you.

Lady A. But I can't do any more for you——

Chev. Then I must take the matter in my own hands.

[The steam-organ outside gives a long discordant groan.]

Lady A. Ah!

Chev. Don't be alarmed, my lady. They are only repairing the pipes.

Lady A. Mr. Mounteagle, what do you mean to do?

Chev. I must take steps——

Lady A. What for?

Chev. To uphold my reputation—and yours!

Lady A. How?

Chev. [*Mysteriously.*] Ah!

[*The steam-organ gives another howl. She puts her fingers in her ears and goes off from window.*]

Juno. Father, you seem to have a wonderful influence over her ladyship.

Chev. Yes. At first I thought it was my personal magnetism——

Juno. And isn't it?

Chev. Partly perhaps, but—[*looks carefully all round and then speaks very mysteriously*], Juno, my child, yonder historical mansion shrouds some skeleton of a painful or ghastly nature.

Juno. Does it?

Chev. The ill-starred house of Kellond is evidently labouring under some species of guilty family secret.

Juno. How did you find it out?

Chev. I haven't found it out—haven't got any idea what it's about—except that her ladyship is emmeshed in the fatal web.

Juno. Is she?

Chev. Mr. Inskip is also one of its victims. And I fancy that lady who came the other day is also deeply involved.

Juno. Which lady?

Chev. I don't know her name, but I heard her say to Lady Anne, "Better tell all to Mr. Spilsby!"

Juno. Who's Mr. Spilsby?

Chev. I don't know. Then Sir John as the head of the family seems also to be marked out for retribution of some sort.

Juno. Yes—and the Honourable Cranage?

Chev. The crafty Cranage has been careful not to implicate himself. I've sounded him——

Juno. Sounded him?

Chev. I've sounded them all, one by one.

Juno. How sounded them?

Chev. Sometimes I let fall a mysterious word, and watch whether they look guilty—sometimes I sorrowfully shake my head, then I wistfully gaze at them, with a far-away look of pity. At other times I suddenly round on 'em with my glance of withering contempt—you know—[*illustrates*] well the result is, they think I know all about their family skeleton.

Juno. And you don't?

Chev. Can't grasp it at all. However, it may prove a very useful family skeleton for me.

Juno. How useful?

Chev. I don't quite know how I stand with regard to this centenary. I've gone to an enormous expense. I've glowed with patriotic pride for all I'm worth. I've got all the London papers coming down to see my new Paradise of Illusion—and if I can only bring it off I am alone, the unchallenged cock o' the walk!

Juno. Yes! Well, you will bring it off; you always do!

Chev. Oh, I shall bring it off. But who's to pay for it all? Suppose Sir John lets me in for the ex's? Suppose the horrible *dénouement* turns out to be that I have provided the bloodthirsty old warrior with this glorious centenary out of my own familiar breeches-pocketum? [*Rattling his sovereigns in his pocket.*]

Juno. Sir John would never be such a coward as to let you in!

Chev. Sir John wobbles to and fro, and is clay in the hands of the truculent Cranage. Lady Anne and Mr. Inskip are on my side so long as I screw them up. The tell-all-to-Spilsby lady—I don't know about her—I must sound her—I'll sound them all again—if I could only find out what the skeleton is——

Juno. Is it some crime committed long ago?

Chev. I don't know. But I've discovered two things——

Juno. What?

Chev. When I was sounding Sir John yesterday I

happened to observe casually that there was no need to go washing dirty linen in public. He flinched, he blenched, he shuddered—that shows that dirty linen has been, or is about to go to the wash?

Juno. Yes.

Chev. Then her ladyship has a peculiar dread of music——

Juno. Dread of music?

Chev. She keeps on begging me not to set up my Juno galloper. Didn't you notice her just now when it suddenly gurgled forth?

Juno. Yes, she was frightened.

Chev. Dirty linen—music—[*Going up to window.*] Music—dirty linen—Yes; we must work away at the family skeleton—Ah! ah! What do I see? The young lordling pensively lurking in yonder glade.

Juno. [*Eagerly running up to him.*] Lord Birdlip?

[*Stops, turns and stands shamefaced.*]

Chev. Go to him.

Juno. No—I can't bear him to think me forward. [CHEVALIER *winks at her, and making signs for her to go out.*] Father, how ought I to behave to him?

Chev. Saunter towards him with a careless nonchalance—as if you were buried in some pleasing train of thought. Make a little start of surprise when you first see him. Bear yourself with all maidenly modesty; at the same time take care to keep him well up to the scratch.

Juno. Yes, father. [*He kisses her.*] Oh, father, you don't think—no, I know it's only my dream, and it will never come true, it isn't possible——

Chev. Not possible?! It is done! It is facto—factotum!

When first these blushing charms the lordling spied
 “By Jove,” quoth he, “yon maid shall be my bride.”
 Bid his lordship enter! Say that “we” are pre-
 pared to entertain his proposals favourably.

[JUNO goes off at back. The CHEVALIER
watches her off, smiles and nods approval,

then struts, coughs and poses; tries to realize his idea of an aristocrat preparing to receive his future son-in-law. After several failures he finds an attitude which he considers suitable to the occasion. He fixes himself in it, and remains posed until JUNO enters at back, followed by LORD BIRDLIP with a parcel in his hand. They both enter very shyly and timidly; LORD BIRDLIP even more shyly than JUNO.

Juno. [*Very shyly.*] Father, Lord Birdlip has something to say to you.

Chev. Come in, my lord!

[*JUNO lights two lamps.*

Lord B. [*Very shy and uncomfortable.*] I've brought you a little present. A box of cigars—your own sort.

[*Offering parcel.*

Chev. My lord, I am profoundly touched. Be seated! Now! A taste of some choice vintage?!

[*Going up to a packing-case on which are several bottles.*

Lord B. I don't generally take wine, but—I—think [*looks up nervously at CHEVALIER*] should like a little to-day.

[*Laughs nervously.*

Chev. A sip of something foaming?! Or my brown sherry is a dream!

Lord B. I don't mind—whatever you take yourself.

Chev. [*Brings down bottles and glasses and the cigar box.*] Then brown sherry be it. Juno, bestir yourself—Glasses! lights! [*JUNO brings two rather large wine-glasses.*] And one of your own choice cigars.

[*Offering a cigar-box.*

Lord B. You know, they're fearfully strong.

[*Hesitating.*

Chev. It were better perhaps to refrain.

Lord B. Oh, not at all. Delighted. [*Takes cigar.*] I've been thinking a good deal about my future career. [*Looking nervously at JUNO, who has got matches and*

is holding one lighted; he takes it.] Miss Mounteagle and I have been talking it over, and she thinks—don't you? [*Looking at her nervously. She looks at him nervously, and suddenly bolts off right, leaving LORD BIRDLIP much embarrassed.*]

Lord B. [*Nervously takes up his wine-glass, sips.*] First-rate sherry that.

Chev. I'm glad you like it.

Lord B. I was saying, that if Miss Mounteagle—

Chev. Yes. [*Encouragingly.*] Fire away, my lad—I beg pardon, my lord.

Lord B. Not at all. I don't mind it. You may call me Birdlip, if you like.

Chev. Thank you. I will. Well, Birdlip, you were talking about your future career—

Lord B. Yes. Uncle Harcourt seems to shy at the idea of my being a showman—

Chev. Showman?! "We" are not precisely a showman.

Lord B. No, no, of course not. I hope you don't suppose that I thought you were a showman. [*Laughs nervously and takes another sip of sherry.*] Jolly sherry that—rather a—warm—

Chev. It is scarcely milk for babes. Then you spoke to the Honourable Cranage—

Lord B. Yes. I told him what a heap of money you were making, eh?

Chev. Money?! Money?! Any display of purse-proud arrogance is foreign to my nature. [*Bringing out a handful of sovereigns first from one pocket, then from another, and jingling under BIRDLIP'S eyes.*] But facts are facts!

Lord B. [*Looking at the money.*] Jolly profession yours! But it ain't the money—it's the life. You must have such a thundering good time!

Chev. Good time?! Our existence is one long ideal beanfeast. Do you think I'd barter my present berth for the carking cares of a throne? Not me, Birdlip.

Or to sit as you are doomed to do, in that gilded chamber at Westminster, the servile slave of party? Not me, Birdlip. No, give me my freedom, and my paltry six or seven thousand a year!

[*Again jingling and displaying his sovereigns.*

Lord B. [*Suddenly bursts out.*] I say it is a thundering shame!

Chev. What?

Lord B. I had to stay at home this term to get my knee right. Now that's better, I've got to pack off back to Eton.

Chev. A thousand pities thus to waste the golden morning of your youth.

Lord B. I say Chevaleer——

[*Trying to muster up his courage.*

Chev. Yes. [*Pause.*] Well, Birdlip? [*Pause.*] Your cigar has gone out. A light?

Lord B. No, thanks. I don't think I'll light up again——

Chev. As you please, my dear Birdlip—as you please.

[*Turns away to pour himself out another glass of wine. LORD BIRDLIP, seeing a favourable opportunity, takes his glass of sherry of which he has only sipped a third, and is about to pour the remainder into the coalscuttle which is close beside him. But the CHEVALIER turning round too soon catches LORD BIRDLIP just before he has time to do it. LORD BIRDLIP quickly lifts the glass to his lips and sips.*

Lord B. Awfully good! Never tasted such brown sherry! [*Sips again.*] Whew!

[*An awkward pause—they look at each other.*

Chev. Well, Birdlip. You were remarking——

Lord B. [*Plunges.*] Mr. Mounteagle, I love your daughter. I shall never love anybody else as long as I live. And if she'll stick to me till I'm grown up, I'll stick to her. And I'll do my best to make her happy, though I know I'm not worthy of her. Whew!

Chev. Birdlip, my lad, this frank and manly declaration of your passion has won my heart. And if these nuptials can be arranged she shall be yours. You have not yet broached the alliance to your family?

Lord B. No. I know jolly well Uncle Harcourt would be down on me.

Chev. I fear he would. *[Going up to window.]*

Lord B. I say, we'd better say nothing about it for a few years. I don't want to do anything sneakish——

Chev. *[At window, drawing down blind, looking out.]* No, no—the matter requires deep consideration. I may perhaps sound her ladyship. *[Looking out of window.]* Ah, your uncle's valet!

Lord B. Lindell? *[Goes up to window.]* I believe that chap watches me. *[Looking out.]* I'm sure he's spying round here now. Chevaleer, if he collars me—couldn't you get him away somewhere?

Chev. I will take him to help me inspect my new Juno galloper. *[Going off at back.]*

Lord B. Thanks, awfully. Chevaleer, swear to me that she shall never marry anybody but me!

Chev. Never, Birdlip, with my sanction. *[Holding out his hand, which LORD BIRDLIP shakes heartily. Peeping off.]* Shush! Lindell. *[Exit at back.]*

Lord B. *[Looks off at back, then at window, left, shows satisfaction, closes door, comes across to door, right, and calls gently.]* Miss Mounteagle! Juno!

JUNO enters at door, right.

Juno. Yes?

Lord B. It's all right! He gives his consent.

Juno. I thought he wouldn't raise any insuperable objection.

Lord B. No—it's my people that will kick up the shindy.

Juno. Lord Birdlip, I'm so afraid——

Lord B. Of what?

Juno. That your relations will look down on me.

Lord B. No—why should they?

Juno. I have been to a young ladies' school—at Upper Norwood—for two terms.

Lord B. I don't think much of girls' schools. My cousin Molly is a specimen of what girls' schools turn out.

Juno. What's she like?

Lord B. She's a beast. She chaffs me. I'm glad you're not like her.

Juno. Why?

Lord B. I'm glad you're not like any of the girls I know.

Juno. Are you?

Lord B. Yes. That's what made me fall in love with you.

Juno. Why?

Lord B. Because you're—well—it's so awfully strange our meeting as we did—it's so different from anything that ever happened.

Juno. Yes. There never was anything like it in all the world before.

Lord B. [*They stana a moment embarrassed.*] *Juno*, give me a kiss.

[They kiss each other quite simply and stand very shy and embarrassed.]

Juno. Hush! somebody coming—

Lord B. [*Runs up to window.*] Yes! Sir John and my uncle! They're coming here!

Juno. What can we do?

Lord B. [*Whispers.*] Through your room out at your window—I'll go through the Chevaleer's, and out at his window—meet at the well.

Juno. [*In a whisper.*] At the well!

Lord B. [*In a whisper.*] At the well!

[Exit JUNO very quietly right. Exit LORD BIRDLIP very quietly left. A pause. A knock at the door at back.]

Cran. [*Looks in.*] Nobody here?

Enters at back followed by SIR JOHN.

Cran. [*Looking round.*] Our friend seems to be making himself at home. Did you give him permission to establish himself here?

Sir J. No, he told Nancy he was coming, and he came.

Cran. [*Chuckles.*] Did you read the article in this morning's "Grandbury Gazette"?

Sir J. No.

Cran. [*Takes a local paper from pocket, reading.*] "The Inkerman centenary at Kellond Park bids fair to become the most magnificent display of its kind that this countryside has ever witnessed. That truly eminent and surprising mammoth-caterer, the Chevaleer Mounteagle, seems to have lavished all his genius upon next Thursday's spectacle. An interesting feature of the preparations is the nightly delivery by the Chevaleer of an oration upon Waterloo to the crowds who assemble in Kellond Park, drawn thither by the irresistible spell of the Chevaleer's eloquence. The Chevaleer's grandfather rendered signal services to his country on the field of Waterloo. The Chevaleer is therefore peculiarly qualified to speak with authority on the subject of his country's battles. The Chevaleer's comparison of Inkerman with Waterloo throws some curious sidelights on the incidents of both fights."

Sir J. [*Has come close to the paper and is looking over.*] What?! [*CRANAGE gives SIR JOHN the paper.*]

Sir J. [*Reads on, shows great indignation.*] This is too bad——

Cran. [*Chuckling.*] You should have chucked him out a week ago, when I advised you.

Sir J. So I would but——

Cran. What?

Sir J. Cranage, I believe this rascal knows something about——

Cran. What?

Sir J. Piper's Heath.

Cran. What makes you think that?

Sir J. He said something yesterday about washing dirty linen [*CRANAGE chuckles and checks himself*], and he keeps on looking at me. I believe he has got wind of it.

Cran. Would that matter very much?

Sir J. Well, no—except—if it were to come out I should look so confoundedly ridiculous. Shouldn't I?

Cran. You would.

[*Chuckles, looks at SIR JOHN, bursts into laughter.*]

Sir J. Cranage, I think it's very bad taste of you to laugh.

Cran. You don't see the joke?

Sir J. No, I don't.

[*CRANAGE continues to chuckle.*]

CHARLIE INSKIP *sneaks in at back at door, which has been partly left open.*

Sir J. [*Very severely.*] Cranage, I think you might see how serious this is.

Charlie. Anything the matter?

Sir J. Yes, Charlie. This showman fellow has somehow got hold of some important family secret——

Charlie. No!

Sir J. Yes.

Charlie. By Jove!

[*The steam hurdygurdy outside gives vent to a prolonged howl which makes CHARLIE start.*]

LADY ANNE *enters hurriedly at back as if to escape the infliction.*

Charlie. I say, what on earth are they doing with that thing? It frightened you, Lady Nancy?

Lady A. Yes—I'm better now. Never mind!

Cran. Well, the question is, what is to be done?

Lady A. About what?

Charlie. Jack thinks that this Chevaleer chap has got hold of some family secret——

Lady A. Family secret?! What makes you think that, Jack?

Sir J. The man's manner. You haven't noticed anything?

Lady A. No, I think his manner is delightful—so fresh and original. Besides—family secrets? We haven't got any family secrets. I'm sure you're mistaken.

Sir J. No. I'm sure he knows something. I wish I could find out what it is——

[*LADY ANNE and CHARLIE look at each other with dread.*]

Enter CHEVALIER at back.

Chev. Ha! Pleasant little family conclave?! May I blend?!

Cran. Certainly, Mr. Chevaleer! I want a few words with you.

Chev. I am ever on the spot. Be seated, my lady. You find us in some confusion. At present our domestic comforts are sacrificed beneath this juggernaut of a centenary!

Cran. [*Looking round through eyeglass.*] All going well with the juggernaut, I trust?

Chev. Excellently well, especially the fireworks!

Cran. Ah! [*Looking round.*] Who are those imposing personages leaning in a careless *dégagé* attitude against the wall there?

Chev. Antony and Cleopatra, from my friend Abel Nokes's Moral Waxworks.

Cran. And the unfortunate lady on the floor?

Chev. Mary, Queen of Scots.

Cran. And how have they managed to escape from Mr. Nokes's control?

Chev. Abel sent them round an hour ago with a request that I would take charge of them.

Cran. Oh! [*Places himself in a very determined attitude in front of the CHEVALIER.*] And now my polyhippic friend, if I may so call you——

Chev. Polyhippic? Certainly!

Cran. [*Surprised.*] Oh!—we will have a little talk about this juggernaut of a centenary!

Chev. Righto!

Cran. To begin—fireworks!

Chev. Fireworks!

Cran. I see you have erected an enormous set piece. How much will it cost?

Chev. Cost?! It will be simply the most epoch-making job that pyrotechny has yet aspired to. Let that suffice.

Cran. That will not suffice. We will dispense with at least two-thirds of your proposed pyrotechny, Mr. Chevaleer.

Chev. Sir John?

Cran. [*Appeals to SIR JOHN.*] Sir John, do you countenance this enormous expenditure of fireworks?

Sir J. No—no, certainly not.

Chev. What?! [*Gets SIR JOHN in front of him.*] Sir John, this is enough to make the old warrior turn in his marble sepulchre yonder. [*Giving SIR JOHN a threatening, mysterious look.*] “What?” I think I hear him mutter, “defraud me of my fireworks?! Rob me of my rockets, on my natal day?! Was it for this I rolled back the tide of battle, etcetera, on the field of Inkerman? Shame on my degenerate descendants! Shame! Shame! Shame!” [*Making threatening, mysterious looks at SIR JOHN, who grows frightened.*] And so on in his righteous anger! [*Turns round again suddenly to SIR JOHN.*] Shame! Shame! Shame!

[*Again mysteriously frowns at SIR JOHN, who is more and more intimidated and gets out of CHEVALIER’S way.*]

Chev. [*Appeals to LADY ANNE.*] My lady, you are

no party to this ill-judged parsimony in the vital matter of fireworks? [*Mysteriously frowning at her.*

Lady A. No—no. [*Gets out of his way.*

Chev. [*Suddenly rounding on CHARLIE.*] And you, gentle sir, what are your views?

[*Making the same signs and frowns.*

Charlie. Oh, I'm very fond of fireworks——

Chev. [*Pursuing him relentlessly with menacing looks.*] You are fond of fireworks? You are fond——

Charlie. [*Avoiding him.*] Yes—yes—very healthy outdoor amusement.

[*The steam galloper outside gives out a few prolonged gurgles and hoots which startle CHARLIE and LADY ANNE, the noise is more prolonged and more nearly approaches a tune; they all listen.*

Charlie. I say, can't they stop that confounded thing?

Chev. No! It must propel its destiny and—yours. Let it croon on. It will throb melodiously by-and-by.

[*Menacing him. CHARLIE shrinks into a corner. The CHEVALIER winks threateningly at SIR JOHN, who has been arguing and disputing with CRANAGE.*

Cran. [*Disputing with SIR JOHN.*] No! No!

Sir J. Yes! Yes!

Cran. My dear Jack, I thought you left this matter in my hands.

Sir J. Yes, but we must have a sufficient display of fireworks. [*Looks timidly at the CHEVALIER.*

Cran. Sufficient display?!

Chev. I take it, Sir John, we understand each other in the vital matter of fireworks, eh?

[*Winks at SIR JOHN with a threatening look.*

Sir J. Yes.

Chev. [*To CRANAGE.*] Pass the matter of fireworks.

Cran. [*Getting irritated.*] Oh no, we will not pass the matter of fireworks. What does this great set-piece represent?

Chev. The turning point at Waterloo.

Cran. And pray what was the turning point at Waterloo?

Chev. You will learn to-morrow night. My own grandsire makes a pathetic figure in the design.

Cran. These astonishing feats of your grandfather that you nightly retail to the populace——

Chev. Retail?!

Cran. Perhaps I should say "Wholesale." How is it that until the last month we have never heard anything of these marvellous exploits?

Chev. "We" do not brag.

Cran. Come now, Chevaleer, tell us quite candidly, who was your grandfather?

Chev. He was a species of village Hampden who, with dauntless breast, performed a series of heroic deeds—in fact every heroic deed that came in his way he performed.

Cran. Yes! Yes! But if he did all these heroic deeds at Waterloo how is it no account of them appears in history?

Chev. We all know how history is written. [*Softly.*] Eh, my lady?

Lady A. Ye—es.

Chev. [*Suddenly rounds fiercely on CHARLIE with a menacing look.*] You, sir! You know how history is written?

Charlie. Yes.

Chev. [*Menacingly.*] Well? Well? Well, sir? [*Glaring at CHARLIE.*] How is history written?

Charlie. Awful lies, most of it.

Chev. Ah! [*Frowns at him, turns quickly to SIR JOHN.*] Sir John, you heard me relate the few simple thrilling words in which my grandsire, on the eve of Waterloo, roughly sketched the state of affairs to the Duke's aide-de-camp who happened to be strolling by?

[*Looking at SIR JOHN with a frown.*]

Sir J. Yes.

Chev. And you heard me recite from memory the Duke's farewell message to my grandsire?

Sir J. No, I'm d—— [CHEVALIER *threatens him.*]
Yes, certainly.

Chev. [To CRANAGE, *who is fuming.*] Pass the matter of Waterloo.

Cran. [More and more irritated.] No, we will not pass the matter of Waterloo.

Chev. My polycantankerous friend——

Cran. What?!

Chev. My polycantankerous friend will not pass the matter of Waterloo.

Cran. I want to know where Inkerman comes in?

Chev. Inkerman comes in a very good second to Waterloo.

Cran. What?!——

Chev. Sir John, I think we understand each other on the matter of Inkerman? [Looking at SIR JOHN.]

Sir J. Yes—certainly——

Chev. [Beaming on LADY ANNE.] And my fair partner in this great scheme—I think my fair partner understands me with regard to Inkerman?

[Winking at LADY ANNE.]

Lady A. Yes—yes——

Chev. [To CRANAGE.] Pass the matter of Inkerman.

Cran. [Fuming.] But, good Heaven, Jack, this can't be allowed to rest here——

Chev. What is the next step my polycantankerous friend wishes to take?

Cran. [Losing all patience.] Polyc—— Jack, do you leave this matter in my hands, or do you not?

Chev. [Menacing SIR JOHN.] Sir John! Sir John!

Sir J. Well—a—I——

Cran. [More fiercely.] Do you, or do you not?

Chev. [Menacing SIR JOHN.] Sir John!

Sir J. No!

[CRANAGE stamps his foot, tears up his programme of the fete, goes off fuming to door at back.]

Cran. I wash my hands of the whole business!

Chev. A very happy inspiration!

Cran. Bah!

[*Exit, angrily, at back.*]

Chev. [*Triumphantly.*] I've conspuayed him! [*Bangs the drum fiercely—they all turn round startled.*] And now, Sir John, to come to petty affairs of sordid cash—do you, or do you not intend to carry out the great centenary scheme which her fair ladyship and I have concocted with such loving care?

Sir J. Well, I——

Enter ABEL NOKES at back.

Abel. [*Stolidly.*] Evening, Tchevaleer. Evening, Sir John Kellond. [*SIR JOHN nods. Glares at LADY ANNE.*] Evening, my lady.

Lady A. Good evening, Mr. Nokes.

Abel. [*To CHARLIE.*] Evening to you, sir.

Charlie. Good evening.

Abel. [*Looking round at the wax figures.*] So you took in Antony and Cleopatra, and Mary Queen of Scots?

Chev. There they are. Your boy said you requested me to take charge of them.

Abel. Yes. I've been reading Shakespeare, and it seems Antony and Cleopatra conducted themselves in a manner which must be shocking to all right-minded people. Mary, Queen of Scots, too—she carried on. [*Taking Mary by the neck and trying to make her sit upright.*] And, mind you [*speaking emphatically and glaring at LADY ANNE*], I won't have no carryings on nowheres near me.

Lady A. No.

[*A short howl from the steam-organ, LADY ANNE shudders. CHARLIE shows great irritation.*]

Abel. [*Glaring at them, very emphatic.*] Not for nobody!

Lady A. No—certainly not.

Charlie. [*Very feebly.*] Quite right.

Abel. [*Turning to the waxwork figures, again trying to make Mary sit up straight.*] My conscience has been

uneasy about 'em for months past—especially Mary, Queen of Scots. So this morning I makes up my mind to chuck 'em out altogether.

[*Looking at CHARLIE.*]

Charlie. [*Very uneasy.*] Seems a pity to do that, eh?

Abel. Won't have nobody in my waxworks as I can't conscientiously akse Mrs. Nokes and my gals to sit down to tea with. So out they goes, Sir John, neck and crop!

Sir John. Very right.

Lady A. Yes.

Abel. Tchevaleer, will you take care of 'em, till I can make up my mind what respectable people I can turn 'em into? [*Again gives Mary a shake up, then contemplates the group with a look of satisfied anger.*] Out they goes, neck and crop! [*He goes up to back, and is going off, turns and looks at LADY ANNE and CHARLIE; he suddenly sees a chance of improving the occasion, and resolves to avail himself of it; he comes down very resolutely glaring round at SIR JOHN, LADY ANNE and CHARLIE.*] What does it behove us to do under the present circumstances? It behoves me to exhort, and it behoves you to listen.

Lady A. Yes.

[*SIR JOHN goes up to back and is going off.*]

Abel. [*Calling him back.*] Sir John, the short address which I am now about to deliver is especially intended to probe and terrify everybody here present—[*glancing round*] so you are kindly welcome to stay.

Sir J. Oh, very well, Mr. Nokes. [*Comes down.*]

Abel. [*Solemnly puts on a pair of large thick old-fashioned spectacles, assumes an attitude, and points to group.*] While gazing on these wonderful specimens of art, which all our kind friends will allow, if not equal to nature, are yet superior to nature, and in some cases more than superior to nature—let us not forget to profit ourselves by drawing a moral from what is

there set before us. What is the moral to be drawn from the group we are now contemplating?

[*The steam-organ howls.*

Lady A. [*Timidly.*] Ye—es—ye—es.

Abel. I reverberate, what is the moral?

Charlie. [*Lamely.*] I don't know.

Abel. Let us evermore bear them in mind for to be a warning unto us; and especially unto you. [*Digging his finger pointedly at CHARLIE.*] And especially unto her! [*Digging his finger pointedly at LADY ANNE.*] Let us evermore strive to act so as to prevent ourselves from carrying on like the guilty parties—[*the steam-organ outside gives one long groan*—]—like the guilty parties now before us; and also from walking in their footsteps, which before now have proved to be the ruin of thousands, and which if not rooted up in the bud, may one day prove to be the ruin of many here, likewise the ruin of you. [*Digging his finger at CHARLIE.*] And likewise the ruin of her! [*Digging his finger at LADY ANNE.*] Tchevaleer, I have done my duty towards the proud ones of the earth. Evening. Evening, Sir John, evening, my lady; evening, sir.

[*Exit at back.*

[*During ABEL'S scene the CHEVALIER has remained quietly watching and has taken no part in it, except by an occasional slight nod of approval to ABEL, and an occasional menacing look at the others.*

Sir J. Extraordinary person!

Chev. Very peculiar.

Sir J. What did he mean?

Lady A. He seems to have some strange delusion—

Sir J. [*To CHEVALIER.*] What was your friend driving at?

Chev. Abel has evidently gleaned something—

Sir J. About what?

Chev. This question of music—[*Glancing at LADY ANNE.*]—or of dirty linen—? [*Glancing at SIR JOHN.*

Sir J. Dirty linen?

Chev. [*Watching SIR John keenly.*] Happy is the family that has no dirty linen——

Sir J. Ye—es——

Chev. To be washed or [*winks at him*] to be otherwise dealt with.

Enter LINDELL at back.

Lin. I beg pardon, Sir John, Mr. Cranage says will you please come to the house at once?

Sir J. What is it, Lindell?

Lin. I can explain as we go along, Sir John—it's very pressing, Lord Birdlip——

Sir J. Oh, very well—I'll come.

Chev. [*To LINDELL.*] I trust nothing has upset my friend, the Honourable Cranage?

Lin. Oh, no—not at all. [*Exit LINDELL.*]

Sir J. [*To CHEVALIER.*] We'll talk about this by-and-by——

Chev. Certainly, Sir John. [*Exit SIR JOHN at back.*]

[*CHEVALIER looks menacingly at LADY ANNE and CHARLIE, bangs the drum authoritatively, and goes up to back. LADY ANNE prompts CHARLIE to speak to him.*]

Charlie. I say, Chevaleer—can't this little matter be arranged?

Chev. Arranged?!

[*CHARLIE prompts LADY ANNE to speak to him.*]

Lady A. As soon as the centenary is over, will you take yourself off——?

Chev. Take myself off?! Where?

Lady A. Anywhere, and never let us see you again—[*the CHEVALIER shakes his head.*] I'll give you an extra two hundred pounds. [*The CHEVALIER looks at her without speaking.*] What do you say?

Chev. I wrap myself in a mantle of disdainful silence.

Charlie. I'll make it another two.

Chev. I merely smile.

Lady A. Well, say five—six—anything you ask.
How much do you want?

Chev. [*Magnificently.*] "We" are not to be bought.
[*Going off.*]

Charlie. But I say, Chevaleer——

Chev. Well?

Charlie. [*Trying a little bluster.*] You know you may
carry this too far——

Chev. [*Rounding fiercely on him.*] Ah?! Indeed?!

[*Bangs the drum fiercely.*]

Lady A. Tell us plainly—what do you intend to
do?

Chev. My duty—though the heavens fall!

[*The steam-organ grinds out a howl as he
goes off at back.*]

Lady A. Has he gone to tell Jack?

Charlie. I don't know. Suppose he has——

Lady A. I'd better tell Jack first. [*Going off.*]

Charlie. [*Stopping her.*] No—no——

Lady A. Yes—much better to come from me. I can
soften it.

Charlie. No—no. Let's tot up the situation. How will
Jack take it?

Lady A. I don't know. He'll think first of his
family—he always does.

Charlie. Yes, Jack will cut up very rough.

Lady A. And all those people in the house! If
there is a scandal—Oh, you wretch! you wretch! you
wretch! To have got me into this fearful mess——!

Charlie. I say, don't reproach me just when I am feel-
ing——

Lady A. Feeling? What?!

Charlie. Jolly sick of the whole business, I assure
you. But for all that I shall see you through. [*She
makes an indignant inclination.*] You needn't fear—
I may not have much physical courage, but I've got
plenty of moral courage, and it's moral courage

that counts. [*Suddenly bursts out.*] That beast of a Chevaleer!

Lady A. Oh!

Charlie. Why didn't you let me horsewhip him at first?

Lady A. Well, why didn't you? Why didn't you?!!

Charlie. I don't know! a momentary failure of physical courage! The beast! And to set that wax-work chap on to us.

Lady A. Waxwork man? Do you think the Chevaleer brought him here to——

Charlie. Oh, yes—put him on to lecture us.

Lady A. Then the waxwork man knows? [*Groans.*] Oh! Charlie, whatever happens, I cannot have that man here another day—I cannot! Oh!

Charlie. Don't give way—I shall see you through.

[*A knock at back, they both look guilty and startled.*]

Charlie. [*In a whisper.*] Who is it?

[*She stands out of the way against the wax-works, motions him to go up to the door; the knock is repeated. He goes up on tiptoe towards the door, and she, moving to get out of sight, knocks Antony over on the floor, screams and jumps away. DOPSON enters at back.*]

Dopson. I beg your pardon. Yes, her ladyship is here—— [*Speaking off.*]

Lady A. What is it, Dopson?

Dopson. Mrs. Fulks-Meesom, my lady.

Enter MRS. FULKS-MEESOM at back. Exit DOPSON.

Mrs. F.-M. My dear Nancy.

[*Looks very chillingly at CHARLIE.*]

Lady A. Laura—you—— [*They shake hands.*]

Charlie. [*Cordially.*] How d'ye do, Mrs. Fulks-Meesom? [*Is about to offer his hand.*]

Mrs. F.-M. [*Bows very chillingly.*] How do you do? *Charlie.* You remember me—Charlie Inskip!

Mrs. F.-M. Oh, yes. [*Looks at him very severely—turns her back on him and speaks to LADY ANNE.*] Nancy, I wish to have a few words with you alone.

Charlie. [*Looks annoyed, then goes up again to MRS. FULKS-MEESOM.*] I say, Mrs. Fulks-Meesom—[*she turns and looks at him*] we used to be very good friends. [*Falters, gets very uneasy.*] I hope—nothing has—has occurred—eh? a—

Mrs. F.-M. [*Looks at him sternly.*] You must excuse my answering under the present circumstances.

[*MRS. FULKS-MEESOM again turns her back on him.*]

Charlie. Oh, certainly——

[*He shows annoyance and goes up towards door at back—makes a gesture at her—she turns and looks at him, he goes up to door—makes a gesture of weak fury and disgust, looks at them; their backs are turned. He shows a sudden resolution and bolts as fast as he can, leaving door open.*]

Mrs. F.-M. Now, my dear Nancy, I have not come here to reproach you——

Lady A. [*Impatiently.*] No, please don't, dear.

Mrs. F.-M. I am quite willing to make every excuse for you.

Lady A. Yes, dear.

Mrs. F.-M. Perhaps I ought first to tell you that yesterday I accepted an offer of marriage from Mr. Spilsby.

Lady A. I'm delighted——

Mrs. F.-M. I've only known him six weeks, but with such a man I feel I've known him all my life.

Lady A. I congratulate you.

Mrs. F.-M. He is one of those rare men in whom one instinctively reposes all one's confidence from the very first moment one meets them.

Lady A. I'm glad! I've a heap of visitors at the house—if you don't mind——

Mrs. F.-M. One moment, dear. When I begged the invitation for Mr. Spilsby for the centenary——

Lady A. Yes——

Mrs. F.-M. I wasn't aware I should be engaged to him. Of course now——

Lady A. Well now?

Mrs. F.-M. We both feel we cannot conscientiously accept——

Lady A. What?! Laura, you surely haven't told Mr. Spilsby about——

Mrs. F.-M. No, dear, no.

Lady A. But you say you both feel you cannot conscientiously accept——What does Mr. Spilsby know about——?

Mrs. F.-M. I've just outlined the particulars to him.

Lady A. Particulars?

Mrs. F.-M. I gave no names. I merely described a fictitious case,——

Lady A. Then of course he guesses——

Mrs. F.-M. No, I think not—at least from what he said just now——

Lady A. Just now—where is he?

Mrs. F.-M. I left him at the house talking to Sir John.

Lady A. Talking to Sir John?! about——?

Mrs. F.-M. Oh no. You may place the utmost confidence in Mr. Spilsby. Shall I fetch him to you?

Lady A. Fetch him?! Laura, this is really scandalous!

The CHEVALIER appears at the open door.

Mrs. F.-M. Well, at any rate, dear, you perfectly understand that neither Mr. Spilsby nor I can possibly come to the centenary?

Lady A. You must do as you please. I think your

behaviour is scandalous To tell Mr. Spilsby! Suppose that I had mentioned about Edinburgh and Captain Bulpit?! Mr. Spilsby! Oh! Mr. Spilsby!

[*The CHEVALIER coughs and comes down a step or two. She turns and sees him.*

Chev. Ha!

Lady A. Did you hear——?

[*Looks at the CHEVALIER, he looks at her. She goes off slowly at back watching the CHEVALIER, who turns and looks at her till she has disappeared. The CHEVALIER is left face to face with MRS. FULKS-MEESOM. She is going off, but he intercepts her.*

Chev. This is a strange catastrophe——

Mrs. F.-M. What?

Chev. How is it to be expiated?

Mrs. F.-M. What?

Chev. We had better discuss it with closed doors.

[*Mysteriously closes the door at back. She watches him.*

Mrs. F.-M. I don't understand you——

Chev. [*Mysteriously.*] Captain Bulpit!

Mrs. F.-M. [*Shows great fright.*] Captain Bulpit?
[*Quickly recovers herself.*] I don't understand you.

Chev. [*Sternly.*] Please to sit down.

[*Points to the drum.*

Mrs. F.-M. Really——

[*The CHEVALIER sternly points to the drum, she sits down on it, regarding him fearfully.*

Chev. Better at once tell me all.

Mrs. F.-M. All what?! You didn't know Captain Bulpit, did you?

Chev. He doesn't know that I know him. He little suspects that I——

Mrs. F.-M. But he's dead——

Chev. It may be so.

Mrs. F.-M. But he is——

Chev. That doesn't alter the facts of the case.

Mrs. F.-M. But I— [*Looks at him, rises, assumes an indifferent tone.*] I really don't know what you mean. [*Is going off.*]

Chev. [*Stops her.*] Please to sit down. [*Pointing to drum. She again seats herself on the drum.*] Now! Better confide in me. Now!

[*He places himself in an attitude.*]

Mrs. F.-M. [*Looks at him fearfully.*] Were you in Edinburgh?

Chev. I was.

Mrs. F.-M. But—[*Rises*] how did you know?

Chev. Please to sit down.

Mrs. F.-M. [*Enraged.*] I can't sit on that thing. [*Agitatedly.*] What do you know about Captain Bulpit?

Chev. Little that is good. [*He mysteriously fetches a chair for her and carefully places it.*] Please to sit down.

Mrs. F.-M. [*Much agitated.*] How did you get to know?

Chev. [*Winks at her.*] I have my emissaries and minions in every town in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

Mrs. F.-M. What?

Chev. You think that I am merely the Tchevaleer Mounteagle, the emperor-showman——

Mrs. F.-M. Well, what are you?

[*The CHEVALIER again winks profoundly at her.*]

Chev. Come! I have little time to waste! The whole painful story, please.

Mrs. F.-M. [*Very agitated, then suddenly.*] It's quite true, but I was very young——

Chev. Ah! [*Shakes his head incredulously.*]

Mrs. F.-M. I wasn't really to blame——

Chev. Ah! [*Shakes his head incredulously.*]

Mrs. F.-M. If you knew all——

Chev. Give me a few details——

Mrs. F.-M. Details! Impossible!

Chev. So bad as that? [*Sighs and looks at her.*]

Chev. Well, what is to be done?

Mrs. F.-M. Done?

Chev. [*Solemnly.*] What about Spilsby?

Mrs. F.-M. Mr. Spilsby?

Chev. Spilsby had better know all.

Mrs. F.-M. What?! [*Rises, very agitated.*] You won't tell Mr. Spilsby? I'll give you anything you ask.—Here. [*Snatches off a ring.*] Take it! And this! [*Takes off a bracelet.*] Take them! Yes do! Do take them, please! And any money you want; you must! Do, do take them! [*Offering.*]

Chev. [*Magnificently.*] I am not to be bought.

Mrs. F.-M. But you won't tell Mr. Spilsby? You won't? Promise!

Chev. [*Calmly.*] Put on those gew-gaws!

Mrs. F.-M. You won't tell? Promise me!

Chev. [*Calmly.*] Put on those gew-gaws!

[*She mechanically puts on the ring and bracelet.*]

Chev. Now—the centenary!

Mrs. F.-M. Yes——

Chev. You will come to the centenary?

Mrs. F.-M. Yes.

Chev. And you will work heart and soul to make it a triumph?

Mrs. F.-M. Yes.

Chev. On that understanding, I will say nothing to Spilsby.

Mrs. F.-M. Thank you—thank you.

[*A knock at the door at back. She starts. A voice outside speaks in a very stern commanding tone.*]

The Voice. Is Mrs. Fulks-Meesom here?

Mrs. F.-M. [*Frightened, makes a sign to CHEVALIER.*] Hush!

Chev. [*In a whisper.*] Who is it?

Mrs. F.-M. Mr. Spilsby.

The Voice. Laura, are you there?

Mrs. F.-M. Yes, dear—just one moment. [*In a whisper to CHEVALIER.*] You won't tell?

Chev. [*Gives her his hand.*] Not a word.

The Voice. Laura, my time is precious—

Mrs. F.-M. Yes, dear, yes, just one moment. [*To CHEVALIER.*] I may trust you?

Chev. "We" are the very soul of honour—the very flower of chivalry. No word shall ever pass these lips.

The Voice. Laura, I have no time to waste. You will find me at the station.

Mrs. F.-M. Yes, dear, coming. [*To CHEVALIER.*] Don't let him see you. Thank you so much.

Chev. Go. Be watchful in future, and, above all, take care this doesn't occur again.

Mrs. F.-M. It sha'n't! It sha'n't!

Chev. Heart and soul for the centenary?

Mrs. F.-M. Yes—yes.

[*Wrings his hand, slips out quietly, door at back, and closes it after her. The CHEVALIER, more puzzled than ever, comes down and sits on drum, draws out a cigar, meditatively cuts off the end.*]

Chev. Iv'e nobbled her, but—[*puzzled*] Bulpit—Edinburgh—Music—dirty linen—Bulpit—of all—Edinburgh—music—Bulpit—

JUNO enters suddenly and excitedly in tears, at back.

Juno. Father, it's—it's all over! [*Sobbing.*]

Chev. What, my darling?

Juno. Lord Birdlip dropped my letter, and that sneak Lindell picked it up and took it to the Honourable Cranage, and now Lord Birdlip has got to go back to Eton to-night—and—and—and [*sobbing*] I shall never see him again!

Chev. Not so, my child! Come! Come!

Juno. N—n—n—never again! [*Sobbing.*]

LORD BIRDLIP runs on at back.

Juno. Ah!

Lord B. I've given Lindell the slip! Chevaleer, I've only a few moments, and I may not see her again for years.

Chev. Righto! [*Creeps off at back.*]

Lord B. Oh, Juno, you'll never forget me?

Juno. Never! Give me something! A lock of your hair?

Lord B. Yes, cut one off.

Juno. [*Gets scissors from table.*] Where?

Lord B. Anywhere—as much as you like.

Juno. My hands tremble so—I shall disfigure you.

Lord B. Never mind. I don't mind how ugly I look, for your sake. Cut off a good lot. [*She cuts off a piece of his hair.*] And here's my old pocket-knife—and my watch-chain——

Juno. No.

Lord B. Yes. You'll write to me every day? And I'll get away to some of the fairs and——

Juno. Yes—yes.

Lord B. Juno, remember this is for time and for eternity.

Juno. Yes—you don't doubt me?

Lord B. I consider it just the same as a regular marriage.

Juno. So do I. [*They kiss each other.*]

The CHEVALIER enters at back.

Chev. Lindell! [*JUNO and BIRDLIP fall apart.*]

LINDELL in overcoat and with LORD BIRDLIP'S rug, umbrella and overcoat enters at back.

Lin. The dog-cart is waiting, your lordship.

Lord B. You can go on. I'll be there in a minute.

Lin. I beg pardon, my lord, Mr. Cranage gave me particular instructions to bring you with me. He's waiting for you at the station.

Lord B. You can go on.

Lin. I beg pardon, my lord. Mr. Cranage's strict instructions. [*Remains.*]

Lord B. [*Goes a step or two and then turns.*] Chevalier, shall I defy this tyranny?

Chev. No, Birdlip, better not.

Lord B. Yes, let me prove to my uncle——

Chev. No! no! Treat your uncle with a quiet, well-bred dignity and contempt; it will do far more to flummox him than any rash revolt against his authority.

Lin. [*Looking at watch.*] I beg pardon, my lord, time's up.

Lord B. I will come. [*He goes very politely to JUNO, takes her hand and kisses it.*] Good-bye.

Juno. Good-bye.

Lord B. [*Comes with great dignity to LINDELL.*] I hate a sneak.

Lin. We haven't a moment, my lord.

Lord B. I'll follow you. [*Points LINDELL off. Exit LINDELL at back. To CHEVALIER.*] Watch over her tenderly while I'm away, Chevalier.

Chev. I will, Birdlip, I will.

Lord B. Swear to me again that she shall never——

Lin. [*Outside.*] My lord!

Lord B. Never——

Chev. Never, Birdlip, never. Between you and me noblesse oblige.

[*Shaking hands. He kisses his hand to JUNO and runs out.*]

Juno. If I stand on the bridge I can see the lights of his train go by.

Chev. Bear yourself with fortitude, my child. Trust to Cupid and the progenitor.

[*Kisses her. She goes off sobbing at back.*]

Chev. [*Calling after her.*] Bear up! Bear up! Fortito—fortitutum!

[*LADY ANNE comes hurriedly up to the door.*]

Lady A. I must see you—are you alone?

Chev. Come in, my lady.

They enter, he closes the door.

Lady A. I can endure this no longer. I've been talking it over with Sir John. We accept all your estimates. Go on with the centenary, and do exactly as you please.

Chev. My lady, say no more! It is all I ask.

Lady A. And now—the future?

Chev. The future?

Lady A. What do you propose to do?

Chev. My lady, fresh from my triumphs here, and I trust with the laurels of the London press still green upon my brow, I open my new *Paradise of Illusion* at Olympia next Monday week! Owing to you I have been able to try my *Paradise Illusion* on the dog, and prepare it for the metropolis. I thank you!

Lady A. You thank me?! Then why have you persecuted me as you have done?!

Chev. Persecuted you? Me?!

Lady A. Why have you—[*Looks at him.*] I know my reputation is in your hands—[*the CHEVALIER, behind her, shows great surprise.*] I want you to know—what you think of me is not true! [A pause.]

Chev. My lady, I'm sorry if I have—[A long pause; they look at each other] Tell me all about it, my lady.

Lady A. It was quite without my knowledge that Mr. Inskip followed me——

Chev. Followed you—where?

Lady A. To the Woolpack—that night! Whatever you may have heard when you were under that table——

Chev. My lady, a discreet veil of silence, eh?

Lady A. No. I want you to be quite sure—I stayed there quite alone that night. Do you believe me?

Chev. My lady!

Lady A. I saw that you thought that I——

Chev. Well you must own things did look a little suspicious, eh? No more of that!

Lady A. Mr. Inskip hasn't the least claim upon me.

Now unless you are a very bad man indeed you'll never make any use of this——?

Chev. My lady, I were a dastard too despicable to be kicked if I did.

Lady A. But you have told the waxwork man?

Chev. Not a syllable, my lady, to him, or to anyone.

Lady A. Then why did he lecture us?

Chev. His chronic affliction. Abel is doomed to lecture everybody.

Lady A. But he glared at us, as if he knew.

Chev. My lady, when I have committed any delinquency, I have noticed that all persons, and all circumstances glare at me, as if they knew.

Lady A. Yes. Then this is quite ended?

Chev. Swept into oblivion, my lady. If you'll pardon a friendly hint—I was fond of my missus—an excellent spouse, and a thorough helpmate. Well there was a little—a little amorous entanglement—nothing much—nothing to break her heart—but I was a good deal happier when I'd told her all about it.

Lady A. Oh, I couldn't——

Chev. [*Winks at her.*] Wait! An auspicious moment will arrive. [*Winks at her.*] Tell him all about it. He'll believe you, and you'll be all the happier.

Lady A. Perhaps I will. Mr. Chevaleer, I'm very much obliged to you.

Chev. Don't mention it, my lady. "We" are ever your debtor.

[*Cheers begin outside. Calls for the CHEVALIER. "A speech! A speech!"*]

SIR JOHN enters at back with letter.

Sir J. Nancy, here's a letter for you from Charlie.

Lady A. Charlie? Where is he?

Sir J. He's off to South Africa. He's got a chance of shooting some big game, and couldn't wait a moment.

[*Gives her the letter. She takes it and reads.*]

Cheers outside grow louder.

Sir J. [*To CHEVALIER*] Lady Anne has told you that the centenary is left in your hands.

Chev. I thank you, Sir John.

Sir J. And bygones shall be bygones.

Chev. [*Shaking hands.*] Bygones have already melted into the distant past. [*Growing cheers.*] Ah, my friends are hungering for my eloquence.

JUNO enters at back, and sits pensively on the seat. The cheers grow louder. The CHEVALIER rouses himself and poses for a speech, coughs, struts, draws up the blind at window, shows himself at the window; renewed and more vigorous cheering. He bows, coughs, struts.

Chev. [*At back.*] My kind lady and gentlemen friends, [*loud cheers*] I will now relate to you a pathetic incident of Waterloo——

[Louder cheers. The steam-organ at that moment booms out in perfect tune, and drowns everything.

CURTAIN.

